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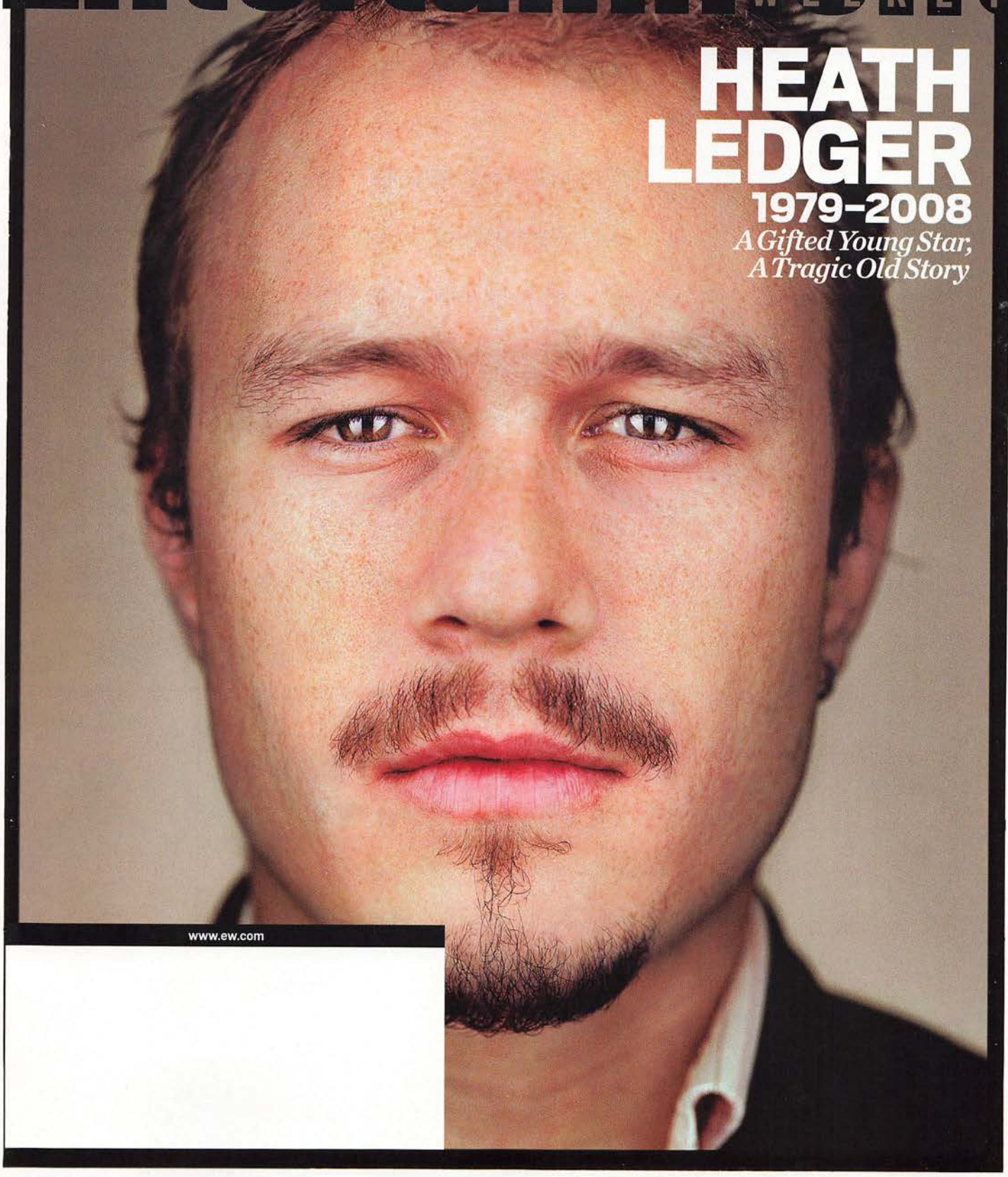
Entertainment WEEKLY



HEATH LEDGER
1979–2008
A Gifted Young Star, A Tragic Old Story

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Contents

FEBRUARY 1, 2008

Departments

4 **FEEDBACK**

6 **THE SCENE**
From a first look at Pixar's *WALL·E* to Sarah Jessica Parker at Sundance...

8 **NEWS + NOTES**
Cloverfield devours the box office... Insider's guide to Sundance...Oscar hopefuls for '09...Vince Vaughn...Hit List...

51 **THE MUST LIST**

80 **THE FINAL CUT**
Mark Harris on what's wrong with the Oscars' Foreign Language Film category.

Features

22 **Fallen Star**
With his fearless role in *Brokeback Mountain*, Aussie Heath Ledger became more than just a pretty face. Now, with his untimely death, a career—and a life—end too soon. BY JOSH ROTTENBERG

28 **Blood, Sweat, and Cheers**
Although mystery surrounds the ceremony itself, the Oscar nominees talk about their shock and joy—and their backup plans for Feb. 24. BY DAVE KARGER
Plus: Contenders for Best Actor and Actress, Supporting Actor and Actress, and Best Director. And a complete ballot.

42 **Golden Opportunities**
Director Sidney Lumet lets loose about a half century of Academy contenders. BY CHRIS NASHAWATY

Reviews

52 **Movies**
A look at recent film finales, *Untraceable*...

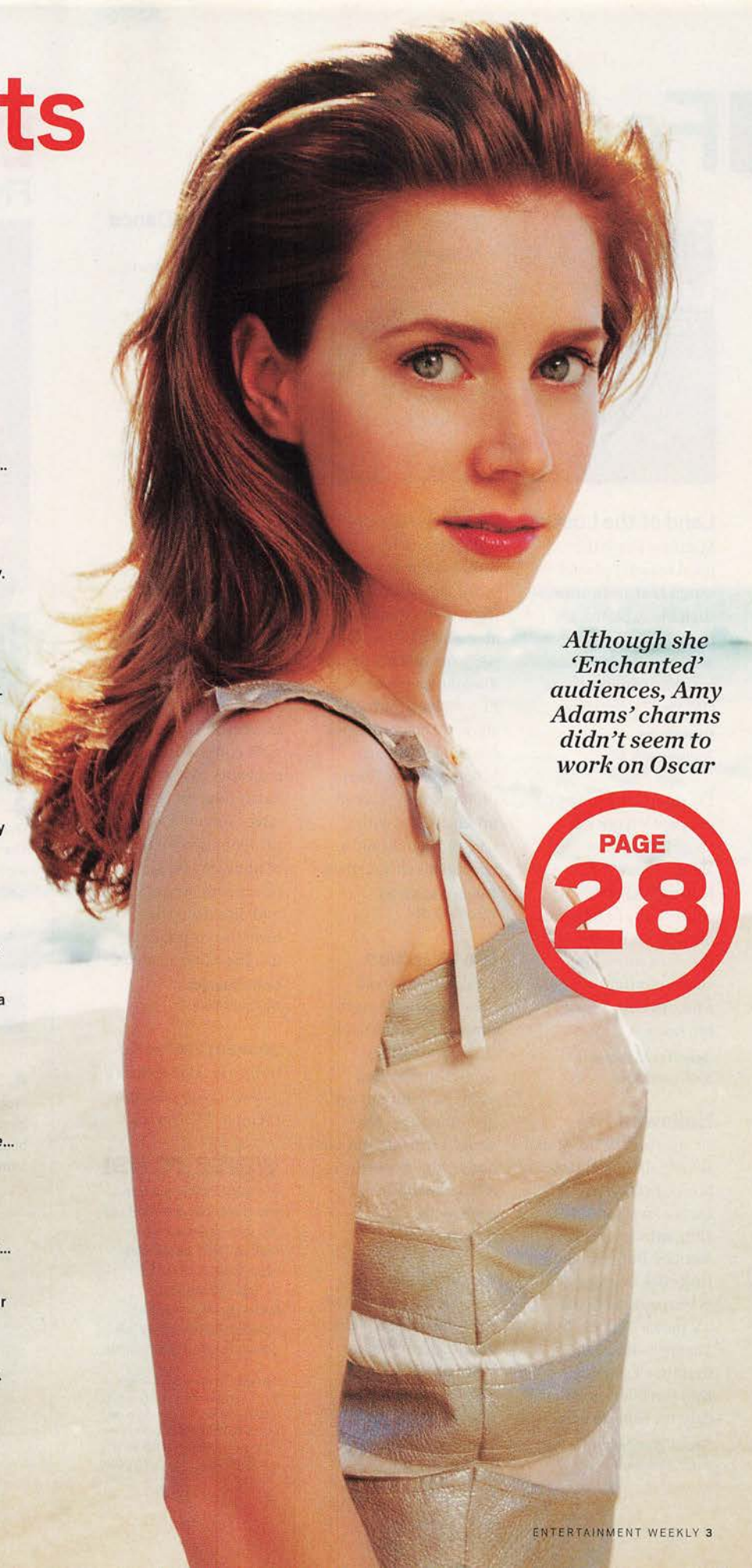
59 **DVD**
Across the Universe, *Blonde Ambition*...

63 **Television**
Eli Stone, *American Idol*, What to Watch...

73 **Music**
TV and film music supervisors pick their favorite up-and-coming artists...

77 **Books**
Tony D'Souza, John Grisham, and more.

ON THE COVER
Heath Ledger photographed by Martin Schoeller for EW on Nov. 4, 2005, in New York City



Although she 'Enchanted' audiences, Amy Adams' charms didn't seem to work on Oscar

PAGE 28

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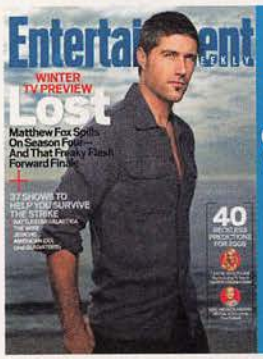
Feedback


Entertainment Weekly
WINTER TV PREVIEW
Lost
Matthew Fox Spills On Season Four—And That Freaky Flash Forward Finale
37 SHOWS TO HELP YOU SURVIVE THE STRIKE
40

"It would've been a travesty had you not put 'Lost' on the cover of your Winter TV Preview. It is the most intriguing concept on network TV."

Todd Derderian
Brighton, Mass.

Land of the Lost

Matthew Fox is the main reason I plan to watch *Lost* again after such a long hiatus. He truly came across as genuine and down-to-earth in your interview (Winter TV Preview).

David Fritz
Melrose Park, Ill.

I'm disappointed your preview left out the show I'm most excited about: *Psych*. It may not feature backstabbing contestants or fabulous outfits, but it's one of the most refreshing shows out there. Maybe a fake psychic is just too normal.

Jennifer Meacham
Southgate, Mich.

Hallowed Hal

Thanks for "'Wild' Man Blues," about Hal Holbrook. In the early '70s, I was a lonely kid struggling with my sexual identity. But I watched Holbrook fearlessly play a gay man in the TV movie *That Certain Summer*—it was the first time I saw anything on television that gave me some insight.

Steve Woollett
Fort Lauderdale

I read your Hal Holbrook story with great interest. Thirty-seven years ago, I was working at a Maryland theater where Holbrook performed *Mark Twain Tonight!* As I helped him prepare for the show, we chatted about life and his career. Whenever I see him in films or on TV, I recall my encounter with a true gentleman and a giant in his chosen field.

Stephanie Kerby
Woodbine, Md.

Bio Graphics

I was elated to read "The Amazing Adventures of a Comic-Book Kid." I too had my comics confiscated by my parents, but my devotion never wavered. I still take out my box of comics yearly to relive my childhood.

Nathan Zee
Honolulu

This article gave me a sense of déjà vu: In high school, I wrote a paper on the literary importance of comics. Jeff Jensen is a man after my own geek heart!

Patricia Muniosguren
San Mateo, Calif.

Lord of the Dance

I'm so glad you finally paid attention to James Marsden (Spotlight). As Corny Collins, he stole every scene of *Hairspray* he was in. And my 10-year-old son could not believe that was *X-Men*'s Cyclops shaking a leg on screen!

Chandra McClure
Lindsborg, Kan.

Sci Fie!

Mark Harris thinks that there are no new sci-fi ideas (The Final Cut)? In my sci-fi collection, you'll find dozens, if not hundreds, of novels with compelling concepts that are easily adaptable to the silver screen. The problem is not a lack of ideas, it's finding producers, writers, and directors who have the courage to use the existing ideas.

Colin Toenjes
Norman, Okla.

CORRECTION *The fraternity in ABC Family's 'Greek' is Kappa Tau (Winter TV Preview).*

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MORE GREAT STORIES ONLINE EVERY DAY

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Five Fun Things Online

Best 'Idol' Auditions

As the latest *American Idol* unfolds, we look back at the tryouts—including season 1 champ Kelly Clarkson's (above)—that surprised a grateful entertainment nation.

2. Sundance Highlights

Our team of intrepid reporters braved the lush parties, swag suites, and star sightings (like Robert De Niro, right) to gather all the news from the fest.

3. Sly Role Call

With *Rambo* (left) hitting screens, we review the highs and lows of Sylvester Stallone's career.

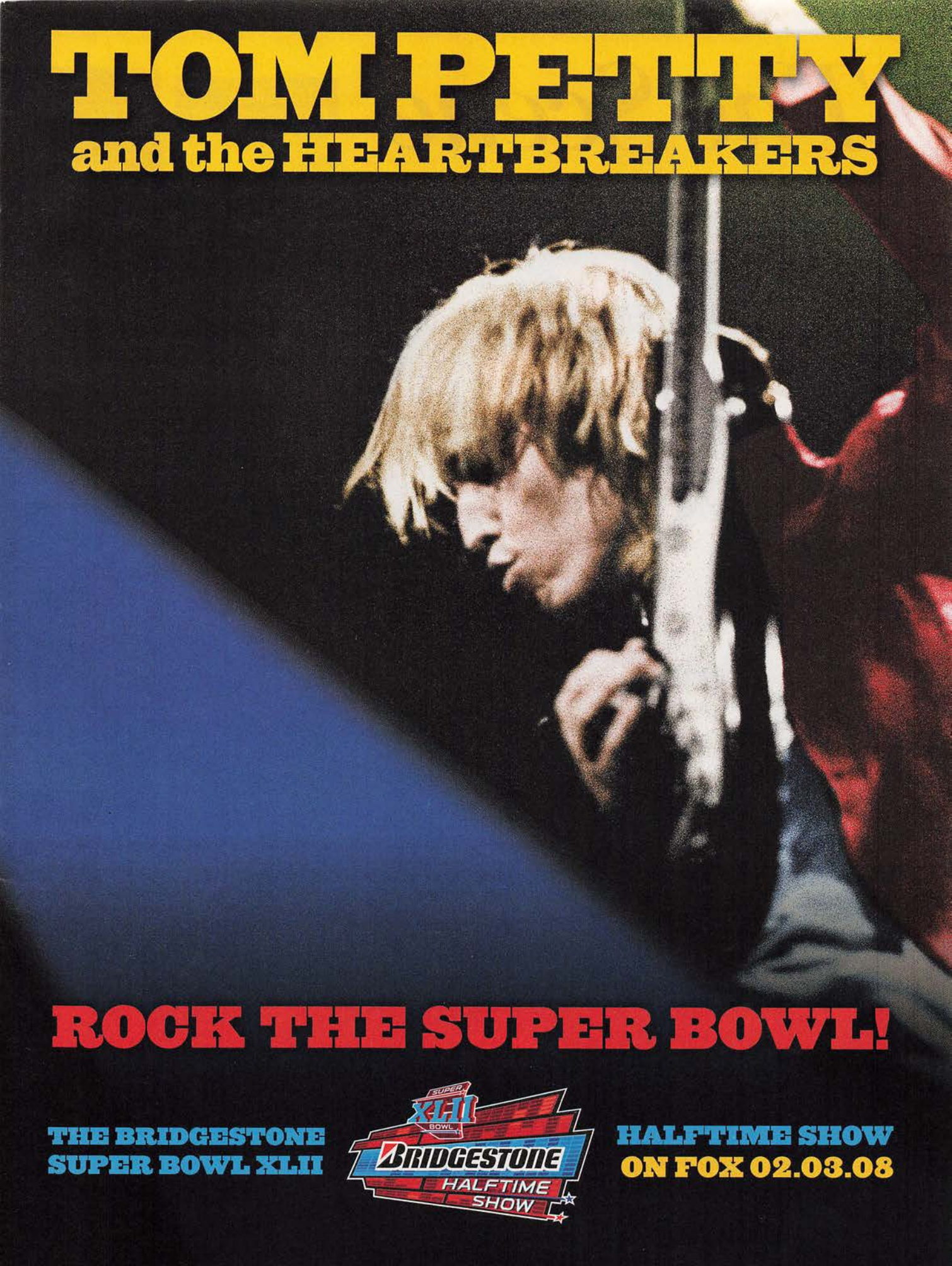
4. Soap Opera Super Couples

From the halls of *General Hospital* to the hourglasses of *Days of Our Lives*, "the stories" have been littered with dynamic duos like Luke and Laura. See where your favorites rank on our list.

5. Bad Lines!

"I'm...just a girl, standing in front of a boy, asking him to love her." Check out such gems (courtesy of Julia Roberts, left, in *Notting Hill*) in our gallery of the worst movie dialogue ever.

CLARKSON: LUCY NICHOLSON/AP; DE NIRO: BRYAN BEDDER/GETTY IMAGES; *RAMBO*: KAREN BALLARD; ROBERTS: KOBAL COLLECTION/WIREIMAGE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The Scene

7 Days in Entertainment

An arctic blast tore through the movie biz last week: In Sundance's chilly sphere (it's freezing in Park City, Utah), film stars bundled up to pimp their projects. Aaron Eckhart and Jennifer Aniston braved the cold by cozying up on the set of their new movie. But our vote for the week's coolest celeb goes to Jerry O'Connell, who does a mean Tom Cruise.

THE MANE EVENT This well-coiffed crew definitely put their stylists to work: On Jan. 17, *Hannah Montana* star Miley Cyrus was flanked by the Jonas Brothers band (from left, Kevin, Joe, and Nick) at the after-party for the premiere of her film *Hannah Montana & Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert*. It'll hit theaters for a one-week engagement on Feb. 1.

"I definitely like performing as both. But it's really fun when you get to go out and do your thing and be yourself. That's the coolest part of being in my show."

—MILEY CYRUS
on appearing as herself and alter ego Hannah Montana on stage

FIRST LOOK

TOTALLY BOT-ON Meet WALL•E, the lone remaining earthly being who holds the key to our planet's future in Pixar's eponymous animated movie (out June 27).

WGA

WEB OBSESSION OF THE WEEK

Among the bevy of clips parodying Tom Cruise's long-winded Scientology sell, Jerry O'Connell's dead-on impression captures the original's essence with boldly maniacal accuracy. Choice line: "For me it's all about KFC. It's just good chicken!" *(funnyordie.com/videos/3f716ffebe)*

HUGGING IT OUT There's no hibernation for an elated Felicity Huffman, who gives a wraparound hello to *Phoebe in Wonderland* costar Patricia Clarkson at the movie's Jan. 20 Sundance premiere.

BABY, IT'S COLD OUTSIDE Aaron Eckhart and Jennifer Aniston are spied on the Vancouver set of their new comedy, *Traveling*. She plays a hotel florist, while Eckhart's a self-help expert and widower.

ALL ACCESS: SUNDANCE 2008

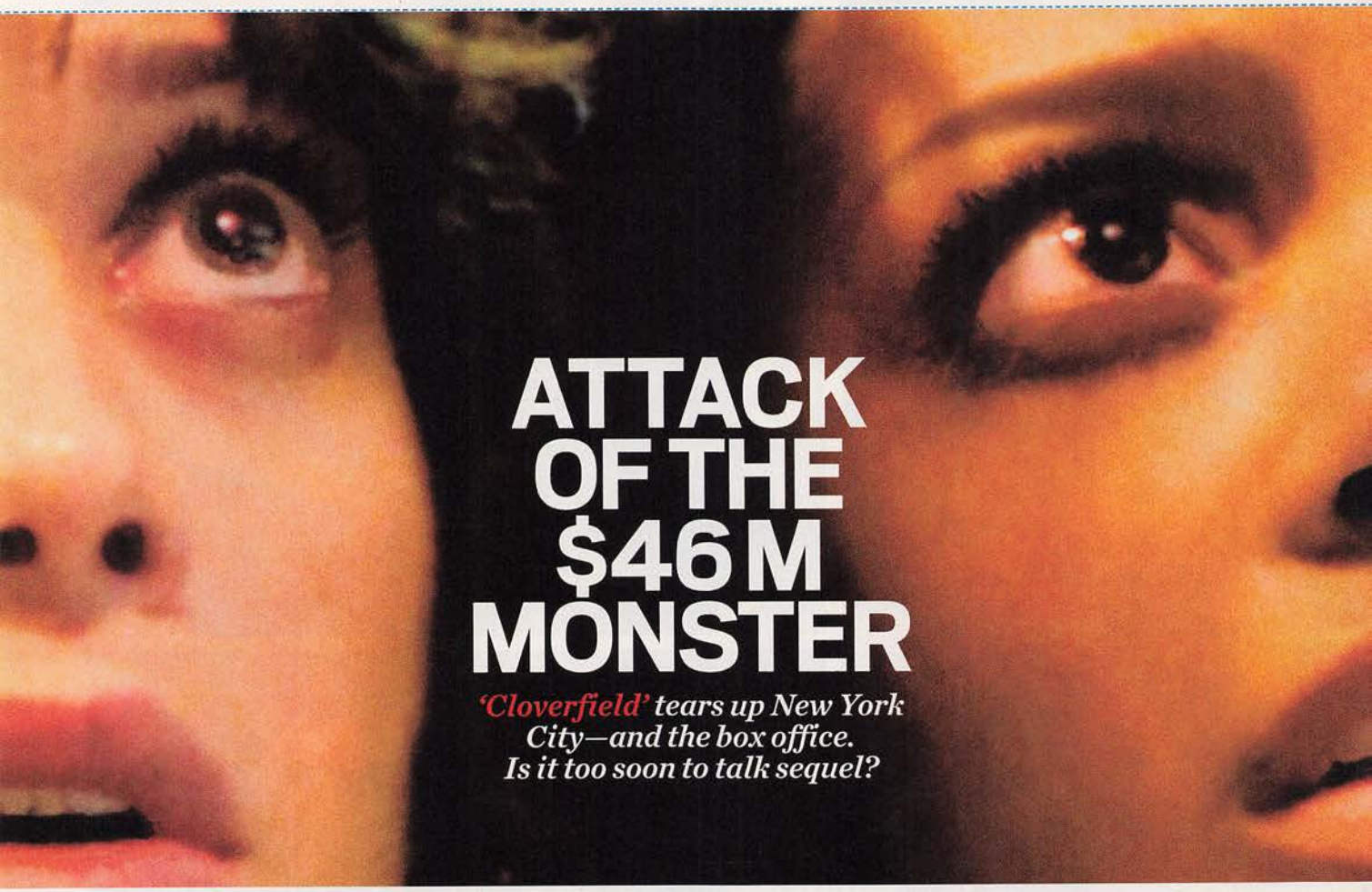
SITTING PRETTY Matthew Broderick and Sarah Jessica Parker went west for the premiere of his comedy *Diminished Capacity*. Parker was also in town to promote her comedy *Smart People*.

THE SHAW REPORT

By Jessica Shaw

IN	FIVE MINUTES AGO	OUT
Growling	*Snorting*	*Hissing*
Antarctic safaris	*Canadian ice fishing*	*Greenland*
Oscar-week getaways	*Oscar pools*	*Oscar parties*

NEWS+NOTES



ATTACK OF THE $46 M MONSTER

'Cloverfield' tears up New York City—and the box office. Is it too soon to talk sequel?

"It really came together in the final week and started to feel like a phenomenon."
—Paramount vice chairman Rob Moore

Michael Stahl-David in *Cloverfield*

What was the deal with the monster? What was up with all the nasty little monsters that kept flaking off the big monster? And most of all: Why was *Cloverfield* called *Cloverfield*? Yep, Paramount's cleverly marketed vid-cam monster movie—produced by cult pop guru J.J. Abrams (*Lost*, *Star Trek*)—has left moviegoers with scads of burning questions, none of which Abrams intends to answer anytime soon. This much is certain: *Cloverfield* is a gargantuan hit. Smashing box office records the way its slimy creature pulverized skyscrapers, Abrams' high-concept viral video Godzilla set a new MLK-weekend mark by grossing $46 million—about $20 million more than many industry estimates. Paramount vice chairman Rob Moore credits the larger-than-expected turnout to intensifying buzz generated by the film's mystery marketing plus surprisingly strong reviews: "It really came together in the final week and started to feel like a phenomenon."

Produced for just $25 million, *Cloverfield* is on track to make Paramount a hefty profit. Yet the film might have a problem keeping the buzz going. According to CinemaScore, ticket buyers gave the brisk-and-brutal 84-minute flick a mediocre C. "This film has polarized people," says Abrams. "Some love its different approach to the monster movie; for others it was the cinematic version of ipecac." Of course, it's also possible that *Cloverfield*'s "unconventional ending," as spoiler-sensitive Moore likes to put it, might have depressed instant-reaction responses too.

But no movie can make this much money and not be considered for a sequel. While Abrams says, "I wouldn't want to rush into it because of the heat on the movie—I'd want to do something that is true to the spirit of what we made," producer Bryan Burk says the creative team "has fleshed out an entire backstory which, if we're

(PP. 8–7) THE JONAS BROTHERS AND CYRUS: LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE.COM; CLARKSON AND HUFFMAN: SARA DE BOER/RETNA LTD.; ECKHART AND ANISTON: VILPIX/FLYNETONLINE.COM; PARKER AND BRODERICK: GEORGE PIMENTEL/WIREIMAGE.COM; *WALL-E*: ©DISNEY/PIXAR; (THIS PAGE) *CLOVERFIELD*: SAM EMERSON (2)

lucky, we might get to explore in future films." Possible plots: an attack on another city or telling the same New York event from other perspectives. (Moore says "official" sequel talk has not yet begun.) Meanwhile, hardcore fans seeking answers can puzzle through a series of videos (keyword "Chuai Station" at YouTube.com) and websites (like slusho.jp/) for clues about the monster. And a forthcoming manga comic might disclose more intel about the creature Abrams and Co. affectionately refer to as "Clover." Taking Manhattan—and destroying it—may just be the beginning of Clover's reign of terror. —*Jeff Jensen*

FILM FESTIVALS

Star Vehicles Get Chilly Sundance Reception

Bono and the Sundance Kid

Only at Sundance would you find Robert De Niro opening for U2. On Saturday, Jan. 19, at the Eccles Theater—the festival's showcase venue—the premiere screening of the IMAX documentary *U23D* was preceded by a showing of De Niro's latest, the star-studded Hollywood satire *What Just Happened?* While U2 fever filled the air from Saturday afternoon on, expectations were also high for *Happened* as a house packed with buyers eagerly took their seats.

The movie—in which De Niro stars as a beleaguered movie producer—features Sean Penn and Bruce Willis drolly playing themselves, and the crowd laughed boisterously at the film's insider yuks. But it's what *didn't* happen after the screening that told you everything you need to know about the first half of Sundance 2008. At press time, not only was De Niro's star-packed comedy still waiting for a distribution deal, but *Sunshine Cleaning*—an audience favorite starring Emily Blunt and new It Girl Amy Adams—was still up for grabs. Even Tom Hanks hadn't drummed up a buyer at press time for *The Great Buck Howard*, a magic-themed dramedy in which he briefly appears opposite John Malkovich. (Not that he's worried—this is Tom Hanks, after all. "I think we've made a good movie, and it'll come out one way or another," he told EW.)

Instead, the biggest deals—which didn't begin closing until day 6 of the festival—focused on projects with more Sundance-friendly casts: *Choke*, a mordant crowd-pleaser about a sex addict (Sam Rockwell) and his insane mother (Anjelica Huston), was snapped up by Fox Searchlight for a reported $5 million; the Luke Wilson feature *Henry Poole Is Here* went to Overture Films for a reported $3.5 million; and Focus Features nabbed the Steve Coogan–Catherine Keener comedy *Hamlet 2* for $10 million, one of the richest deals in Sundance history.

Conventional wisdom said that studios would spend more millions than ever this year to shore up their film slates, in light of the current writers' strike. But the new round of informal talks between the WGA and producers may have stopped any potential panic buying. The cautious pace of Sundance sales so far could also mean that studios are learning a few lessons from years past. Take 2007, when two of the festival's big multimillion-dollar acquisitions—*Grace Is Gone* and *Joshua*—grabbed huge buzz before eventually flopping. (Their combined purchase price: $7.7 million. Their combined theatrical gross: $518,968.) "I think intense coverage from the media talking about what films from last year didn't perform made the buyers nervous," says Sun-

THE BULLSEYE

They shoot, we score: rating the biggest hits and misses in pop culture this week

The Razzie nominations are in, and we're pulling for a *Bratz* sweep
Judy Greer in *27 Dresses*. Give this serial scene-stealer her own movie already!
A match made in Crazytown: **Selma Blair** cast as **Molly Shannon**'s daughter in NBC pilot *Kath & Kim*
Let the music play! WGA says it won't picket **the Grammys**
Rumor has it that **Gossip Girl** is Serena's brother, **Eric**. That's lame. XOXO, Bullseye
Spotted, sadly, at Sundance: **Stiletto-heeled "snow boots"**
Promise of a new career? **Paula Abdul**'s new single is actually *not* horrible

EW.COM POLL

PREACHER MAN

A video of Tom Cruise advocating Scientology was an online hit

Has Cruise been overly scrutinized for his religious beliefs?

59% No
41% Yes

To vote in the latest poll, go to EW.com every Monday

Ringo vs. Regis

CRUISE: JOERG CARSTENSEN/DPA/LANDOV; STARR: ROB SHANAHAN/GETTY IMAGES; BRAD & JENNIFER: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE; SHANNON: FREDERICK M. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES; ABDUL: COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; CONNOR PAOLO: ERIC LIEBOWITZ; SPELLMAN/WIREIMAGE; SHANNON: JOHN SPELLMAN/RETNA

dance fixture John Sloss, who reps several films each year. Adds Michael Schaefer, a VP of acquisitions for Summit Entertainment, "People just don't want to overpay anymore." Or maybe, in the end, this year's first-half lineup—heavy on dark comedies like *Choke* and *Sunshine Cleaning*—simply wasn't strong enough to generate the usual heat in chilly Park City. Says Art Linson, the producer whose book *What Just Happened?* is based on, "People usually buy things because they *want* to—not 'cause they have to." *—Gregory Kirschling, with additional reporting by Missy Schwartz*

LEGACY

Remembering Two of TV's Favorite Faces

Pleshette 1937–2008

Melvin 1923–2008

Some supporting actors become known for one role; others play the field. Suzanne Pleshette, who died Jan. 19 at age 70, will remain forever known as Bob Newhart's first TV wife, Emily Hartley. Allan Melvin, who died Jan. 17 at age 84, was remembered (depending on your age) as Corporal Henshaw in the '50s sitcom *The Phil Silvers Show*, Alice's boyfriend on the '70s sitcom *The Brady Bunch*, Archie Bunker's pal Barney on *All in the Family*, or for countless semiregular sitcom roles before and after.

After a movie career that included playing opposite Tippi Hedren in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, Pleshette's throaty voice and steely gaze made her an unexpectedly perfect foil for the gentle psychologist character at the center of *The Bob Newhart Show*. Few TV wives were as enjoyably skeptical as Pleshette's Emily. When she reprised her role in the 1990 series finale of her costar's subsequent hit, *Newhart*—one of the greatest surprise endings in TV history—all seemed right with the world again. Melvin, by contrast, was such an endearing, ordinary-Joe type that he ably played eight different roles on episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show* while still imprinting our memories with *Silvers*' hustling Corporal Henshaw and *Brady*'s affable Sam the butcher. Talk about being a go-to guy: Melvin was even the cartoon voice of Magilla Gorilla. Their charms were very different, but Pleshette's and Melvin's lasting legacy is this: They remind us how deeply good supporting actors can get into our hearts and minds. *—Ken Tucker*

Early 'Idol' Favorites

Sure, the judges have only hit a handful of cities. It's never too early to predict who could zoom into the top 12. —Jessica Shaw

JONATHAN BAINES
There's always one nonthreateningly cute boy that gets tween fingers dialing. Unlike some of the past hopefuls to fill those shoes (we mean you, John Stevens and Sanjaya), this 17-year-old has a killer voice to go with his adorably shaggy hair.

KRISTY LEE COOK
Her personal story (she lives in a log cabin!) and model-worthy looks are just the icing on the cake. So what if she once had a record deal? Kristy Lee's rendition of "Amazing Grace" should carry her all the way to the finals.

PIA "ZPIA" EASLEY
We're a little scared of what look like facial tattoos. And we don't get the nickname. But we're positive Pia "Zpia" is one of the most interesting singers *Idol* has ever found. Her audition left even Simon slack-jawed.

MICHAEL JOHNS
Normally, we would comment on his pitch-perfect rendition of "I've Been Loving You Too Long." But those biceps and that Australian accent have pretty much left us incapable of stringing more than a few words together.

OSCAR WATCH 2009

Now that the Academy has announced its nominations (see page 28), why not take a stab at who might fill *next* year's Oscar ballot? *—Dave Karger*

Body of Lies Ridley Scott directs Russell Crowe and Leonardo DiCaprio in a timely political drama adapted by *The Departed*'s Oscar-winning William Monahan.

Blindness Four-time nominee Julianne Moore is the only woman whose vision is spared when an entire town suddenly loses its sight. *The Constant Gardener*'s Fernando Meirelles directs.

Milk Sean Penn will play murdered politician and gay activist Harvey Milk in Gus Van Sant's biopic, also starring Josh Brolin and Emile Hirsch.

Revolutionary Road DiCaprio stars (again!), reuniting with Kate Winslet in *American Beauty* director Sam Mendes' 1950s-set domestic drama.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button David Fincher's reverse-aging fantasy features past and present nominees like Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, and Tilda Swinton.

PLESHETTE AND MELVIN: CBS/LANDOV; *BODY OF LIES*: FRANCOIS DUHAMEL; *BLINDNESS*: KEN WORONER; PENN: TODD WILLIAMSON/WIREIMAGE; REVOLUTIONARY ROAD: JAMES DEVANEY/WIREIMAGE.COM; THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON: ©

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COMMENTARY

Our Love (Hate) Affair With C-List Exploitation

Between Stephen Baldwin remaking his career as a famous-brother-for-hire (he's upgraded from *Celebrity Mole* to *Celebrity Apprentice*!) and a shockingly unhealthy Jeff Conaway enduring his detox in front of a prime-time audience on *Celebrity Rehab*, you might say reality TV's business of exploiting C-list performers is turning into a tawdry *Circus of the Stars*. But you'd be wrong—it's actually two circuses. Both ABC and NBC hope to revive the '80s nostalgia act with "stars" performing acrobatic stunts. VH1 plans to chime in with *Celebracadabra* (famous people doing magic tricks), CBS has unveiled *Secret Talents of the Stars* (famous people doing party tricks?), and producer Michael Davies (*Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*) is developing *The World's Strongest Celebrity*. This, it seems, is a trend without end.

Who knew, watching Ozzy Osbourne paw ineffectually at his TV clicker on MTV's *The Osbournes* in 2002, that the rocker's sad but deliciously compelling struggle would launch a celebsploitation industry? Today there's no shortage of down-at-their-heels stars happy to overshare for the camera: We know how much Tiffany weighs, what drugs Danny Bonaduce has

Apprentice's Lennox Lewis, Gene Simmons, and Baldwin

done, and exactly where Bobby Brown's hands have been. Not that we're judging—our addiction to these shows makes us complicit. Still, how about some quality control? We're fascinated by celebs in their pseudo-natural habitats—trading on their fame (*Celebrity Apprentice*), kicking booze (*Celebrity Rehab*), dieting (*Celebrity Fit Club*), and puttin' on a show (*Dancing With the Stars*). But magic tricks and big tents? When TV stretches credulity on celebrities' innate talents (see: *Armed & Famous*), it stretches our patience.

Sadly, that doesn't mean we won't be watching one of the lesser *Growing Pains* kids work a trapeze in a few months. If the TV strike drags on, we'll have no choice. At least that's what we'll tell ourselves when we're setting our TiVo's season pass. —*Alynda Wheat*

HITLIST

By Scott Brown

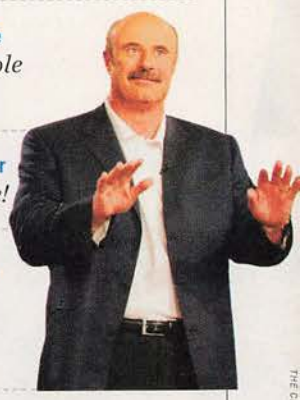
1 Kiefer Sutherland gets out of jail after 48 days *And not one pinky broken? Not one extremity electrocuted? What kind of lousy prison was this?*

2 Tom Cruise, Jerry Seinfeld double-date with wives *Afterwards, Seinfeld humorously observed, "You ever notice how rich people are friends, no matter how seemingly incompatible they are?"*

3 Matthew McConaughey's mom wants the father-to-be to wed *If Matty makes an honest woman of his old lady, Mama McConaughey says there's a pair of tiny bongos in it for the baby.*

4 Kanye West reportedly performs at sweet-16 party *It's research for his post-'Graduation' project, 'Regression.'*

5 Sarah Michelle Gellar bares all in ad for Vaseline *She claims it's research for her upcoming role as Ashy the Psoriasis Slayer.*



6 Natalie Portman launching line of vegan footwear *Nothing cushions the arches like soy cheese!*

7 Dr. Phil McGraw calls his statement on Britney Spears a mistake *As Dr. Phil himself might say, this is the first step to admitting his entire guruhood is a mistake.*

8 Lindsay Lohan required to visit morgue as part of DUI plea deal *Sounds like the sentencing judge had to sit through 'I Know Who Killed Me.'*

9 Dakota Fanning's little sister is new Sundance darling *There are six more Fannings on the way. They're like nested Russian dolls.*

10 *Survivor* winner Yul Kwon reportedly considering a run for U.S. Congress *'Survivor: Congress' is like the regular 'Survivor,' except the motto is just "Outlast." And I don't think they're ever going to top the unforgettable "Strom" season.*

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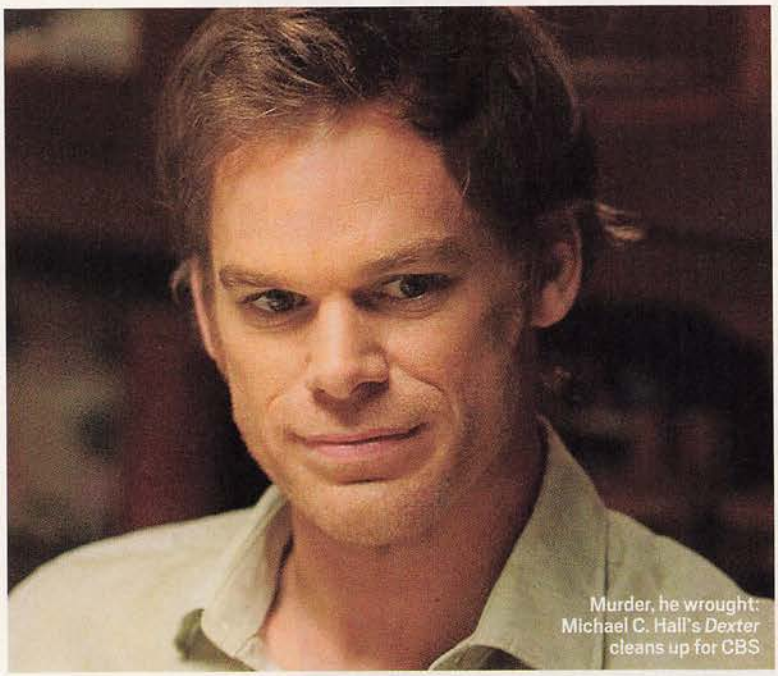


Murder, he wrought: Michael C. Hall's *Dexter* cleans up for CBS

Television By Lynette Rice

THE CUTTING ROOM

+ CBS' unprecedented decision to begin airing repeats of Showtime's *Dexter* on Feb. 17 seems like a deadly proposition given the show's hyperviolent theme: The drama focuses on a forensics expert (**Michael C. Hall**) who moonlights as a vigilante serial killer. But Showtime entertainment president Robert Greenblatt, who personally oversaw the editing process since the drama's writer-producers are on strike, says it was a cinch: CBS didn't require the episodes to conform to the standard 44-minute length, so he only had to shave roughly six minutes off of each installment—and most cuts involved little more than dirty words. "CBS never asked us to reduce the number of killings or to change the psychology," explains Greenblatt. "Aside from some cosmetic changes, you'll see virtually the same show. *Dexter* doesn't have a lot of overt violence or sexuality. It's just the premise that makes people squirm a bit."

+ Having scored a box office bull's-eye with *Cloverfield*, producer **J.J. Abrams** is now turning his attention to *Fringe*, his two-hour pilot for Fox that focuses on a trio of investigators who solve supernatural and sci-fi mysteries. Production on the project—which stars **Mark Valley** (*Boston Legal*) and **Kirk Acevedo** (*The Black Donnellys*)—is expected to start as early as Feb. 1 and could cost Fox up to $10 million for the pilot alone. *Fringe*, which earned a series commitment from Fox, is slated for a fall bow, though the 2008–09 season could be disrupted by the strike. Says a source close to the project, "The best way to work with J.J. is to not put him in a position where he feels forced."

Music By Chris Willman

Here's the Score: Oscar, 1; Rockers, 0

+ Looks like we won't get to see Radiohead and Eddie Vedder (right) rub elbows at the Oscars. Shortly before the noms were announced, the Academy bumped the *There Will Be Blood* score, composed by Radiohead guitarist Jonny Greenwood, from contention because director Paul Thomas Anderson also used about 15 minutes of a 2006 Greenwood composition and a number of existing classical pieces—and Oscar disqualifies scores "diluted by...pre-existing music." Vedder's *Into the Wild* song "Guaranteed," meanwhile, may have suffered since, according to Academy rules, Paramount Vantage had to send music-branch voters a video clip of its use in the movie. Problem is, the song only plays in its entirety over the end credits—its use in the film consists of several instances of Vedder humming. Then again, what chance did even the non-mumbled version have against *Enchanted*'s deliberately hokey "Happy Working Song"?

Movies By Adam B. Vary

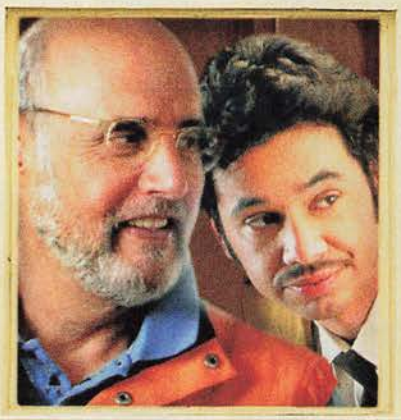
TO TELL THE TRUTH

+ **Colin Hanks** is at work on a documentary "about the fall of the music industry," while **Virginia Madsen** (left) did dozens of interviews for *I Know a Woman Like That*, a look at "women living vibrantly when the world says 'You should be old now.'" These include her mother Elaine, 74, an Emmy-winning documentarian who was almost too busy to direct it. "She said, 'Well, I have to finish my book, I'm going to Europe...,' and I was like, 'See? You *are* this woman!'" *(Reporting by Gregory Kirschling and Whitney Pastorek)*

DEXTER: PETER BOVING; VEDDER: DANNY CLINCH; MADSEN: FRANK MICELOTTA/GETTY IMAGES

WELCOME TO The Captain

From the co-writer of "Meet the Parents"



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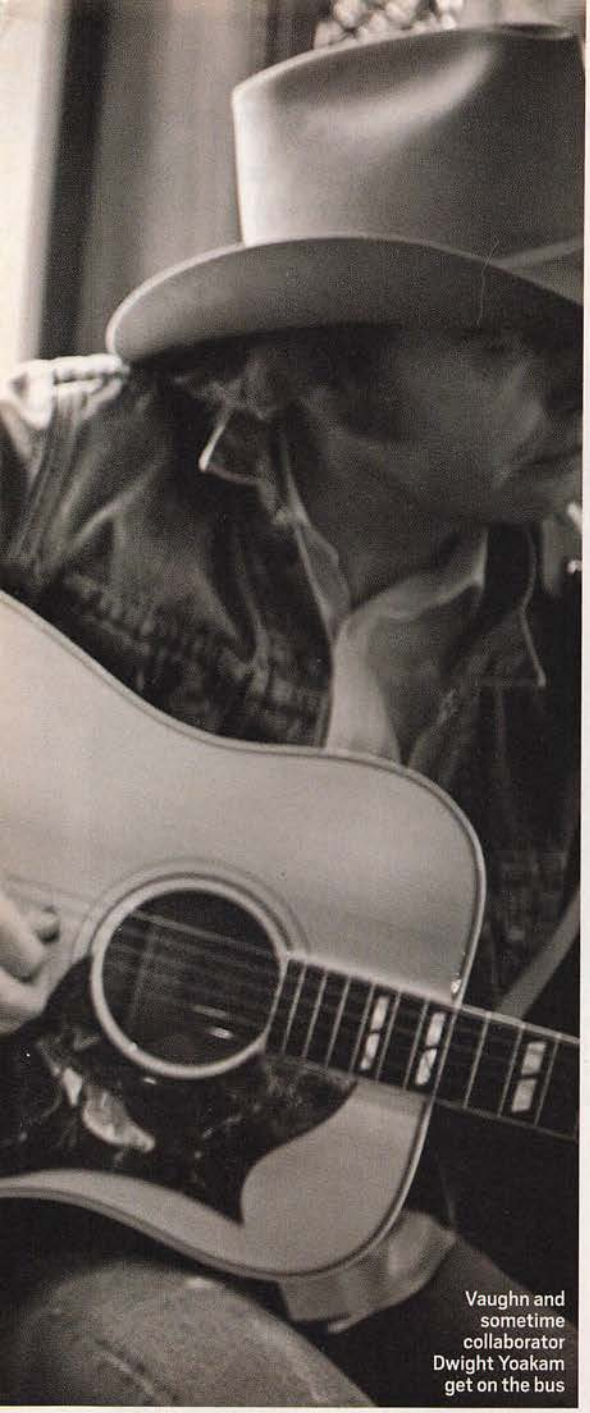
Vince Vaughn

What happens when a big-screen funnyman hits the road with a busful of stand-ups? Vaughn's new documentary throws a lasso around the Wild West Comedy Show.

BY SHIRLEY HALPERIN

At 6 feet 5 inches, Vince Vaughn barely clears the ceiling of his tour bus—a glitzy, leathery behemoth befitting a band like the Rolling Stones. But back in the fall of 2005, the 45-footer served as temporary home to Vaughn and the posse of comedians he handpicked for a monthlong cross-country stand-up tour. Vaughn's resulting documentary about the trek, *Vince Vaughn's Wild West Comedy Show*, proves he may have had the rocker trappings down, but the actor had to learn a thing or two about the lifestyle: "When we decided to book the tour, I had no experience with any of this," Vaughn laughs. "I originally thought 30 days and 30 nights because it had a nice ring to it. I didn't realize you

STYLING: ALIX HESTER. HAIR & MAKEUP: MORAG ROSS. SUIT & SHIRT: DOLCE & GABBANA



Vaughn and sometime collaborator Dwight Yoakam get on the bus

need a day off once in a while. It's like you're being Federal Expressed from stage to stage."

Today, Vaughn is back on the bus to promote *West* (in theaters Feb. 8) and parked outside of one of his favorite stops—the Crystal Palace in Bakersfield, Calif., a shrine to the late Buck Owens. A Chicago-area native, Vaughn is quick to defend his country cred by dropping the fact that his grandfather was a dairy farmer and his family hails from Ohio. As a result, he says, he feels perfectly at home here. "A lot of these guys, like Buck and Johnny Cash, had these extreme existences, picking up, moving, and looking for work," the 37-year-old explains with a hint of *Hee Haw* awe. "The songs were just expressing that." It was his deep admiration for those musicians and their struggle that inspired *West*. "The emotion, the experience came first, which is a correlation I made when I saw these comics.... It's a hard lifestyle to get up every night and [perform] to just 20 people. The movie is about learning who they are, and how their comedy comes from a real place."

Though Vaughn was never officially a stand-up, he's been a regular in L.A. comedy clubs since the early '90s, when he met Ahmed Ahmed, one of the comics who'd tour with *West*. In fact, almost everyone involved in the film is family (sister Victoria serves as an exec producer) or a longtime friend, including Jon Favreau, who drops in at the Hollywood show to compare Vaughn's acting style to that of "a windup monkey."

So when it came to releasing *Wild West*, Vaughn didn't want to see his passion project degenerate into Guys Gone Wild. "When we took it to Toronto, it played phenomenally," says Vaughn of the film's first major screening in 2006. It earned the attention of Harvey Weinstein, who agreed to buy distribution rights—until the two clashed over their visions. "How they were going to market the movie was very different from how I saw it," Vaughn explains. "It was presented as more of a screwball comedy. I just felt that it wasn't in sync, and Harvey was nice enough to let me have the movie back." Back on Vaughn's terms, the film will debut on more than 700 screens. "It's a small release, but at least we have a chance to make some noise. What mattered to me most was that it got the right shot."

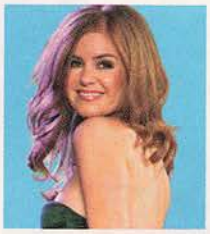
"I didn't realize you need a day off once in a while. It's like you're being Federal Expressed from stage to stage."

Of course, not every job can be a labor of love; luckily, Vaughn's brand of motormouth comedy remains in demand. These days, he's the poster boy for Christmas; he'll follow up recent hit *Fred Claus* with *Four Christmases*, costarring Reese Witherspoon (slated for November). While *Claus* was for the kids, Vaughn likens *Christmases*, in tone, to Favreau's agonizing phone call in *Swingers*. "It's really funny and relatable, but also, like, hide your eyes," he says. As for reports that he and Witherspoon have been clashing on set, Vaughn has nothing but raves for Reese: "She's one of my favorite actresses." (See sidebar for more on the comediennes Vaughn admires.)

Vaughn may be working on mainstream fare, but he keeps a memento of *West* nearby: He bought the tour bus, which he's now using as his trailer on *Christmases*. It reminds him what you can accomplish in Hollywood. "It's not encouraged to put yourself in a documentary," he says. "But I didn't do it to be different. I'm just looking for what keeps me inspired." ■

Funny Femmes

Sure, 'Wild West' is an all-boys club, but which women make Vaughn laugh?



ISLA FISHER
"The scenes with me and Isla in *Wedding Crashers* are some of the best in the film, [because] it's like a Ping-Pong match, very 50–50. We're both giving, taking, and working well off each other."

TINA FEY
"I like what Tina Fey has done on *30 Rock*. I think she's really talented, a great writer and performer...one of the better comedic voices and minds that are out there—male or female."

REESE WITHERSPOON
"*Election*, the *Legally Blonde* movies...she's got great comedy [in how] she commits to a circumstance and plays it very real. We've had great stuff so far even in *Four Christmases*."

FISHER: DANNY MOLOSHOK/AP; FEY: CHRIS CARLSON/AP; WITHERSPOON: CAROLYN KASTER/AP

PHOTOGRAPH BY SHERYL NIELDS

Style

YOU BETTER WORK

Judging by the haute couture on 'Lipstick Jungle' and Patricia Field-styled 'Cashmere Mafia,' it seems that today's office attire is more McQueen than Macy's. But TV's working women weren't always so fashion-forward, as evidenced by this look back. BY TIM STACK

On 'Cashmere' Lucy Liu's character, magazine magnate Mia, clearly takes a page from the fashion bibles she publishes.

Brooke Shields plays Wendy, on 'Jungle,' a movie exec juggling a family and a full production slate, all while rockin' a smart Dior suit.

2006–Present

UGLY BETTY
Betty might be the star, but Wilhelmina (Vanessa Williams) gets to rock the DVF and D&G each week.

1997–2002

ALLY MCBEAL
Hate on Ally's (Calista Flockhart) hemlines, but they certainly helped her dodge dancing babies.

1988–1998

MURPHY BROWN
As with her name, Murphy (Candice Bergen) often took her sartorial cues from the masculine world.

1986–1993

DESIGNING WOMEN
The Southern gals (including Delta Burke) never met a brooch they didn't love. Or a shoulder pad.

1978–1982

WKRP IN CINCINNATI
Jennifer (Loni Anderson) was clearly inspired by the three B's: bold, blond, and boobs.

1970–1977

THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW
Moore turned the world on with her smile—and her jaunty shirtdresses.

ET TONDS AND MURPHY: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE; WINEHOUSE: EARL/ROBINSON/SPLASH NEWS; NOTH: WALTER MCBRIDE/WP; MA ALLEN, WASHINGTON: DAVE M. BENETT/GETTY IMAGES; MAY: RAY TAMARRA/GETTY IMAGES

CASHMERE MAFIA: PATRICK HARBRON; LIPSTICK JUNGLE: NICOLE RIVELLI; UGLY BETTY: ANDREW ECCLES; ALLY MCBEAL: LARRY WATSON; MURPHY BROWN: CBS/LANDOV; DESIGNING WOMEN: CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE; WKRP IN CINCINNATI: EVERETT COLLECTION; THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW: GENE TRINDL

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Monitor

BIRTHS

Chris Noth (a.k.a. *Sex and the City*'s Mr. Big), 53, and his girlfriend, actress Tara Wilson, are now first-time parents. Son Orion Christopher arrived Jan. 18 in L.A.... Also in the new-parents club: *Celebrity Rehab*'s Daniel Baldwin, 46, and wife Joanne Smith-Baldwin, who welcomed daughter Avis Ann on Jan. 17 in L.A.

SPLITS

In a joint statement released on Jan. 16, Eddie Murphy, 46, and Tracey Edmonds, 40, announced that they've parted ways only two weeks after holding an unofficial wedding ceremony on a private island near Bora Bora. The couple say they have "decided to remain friends."

RECOVERING

On Jan. 17, country star Faith Hill, 40, announced that she underwent knee surgery to repair an old softball injury from high school. Though now undergoing physical therapy, the singer will continue to record her 2008 Christmas album as planned.... On Jan. 18, a spokesperson for Lily Allen, 22, confirmed that the British singer suffered a miscarriage. Allen and her boyfriend, the Chemical Brothers' Ed Simons, 37, announced her pregnancy last month.

WINEHOUSE OF PAIN

Amy Winehouse's image took another hit on Jan. 22, when U.K. tabloid *The Sun* posted footage allegedly showing her smoking crack. A rep from *The Sun* said the clip was filmed Jan. 18. "We are deeply disappointed...by these latest revelations and are doing everything we can to offer Amy our full support," said her label in a statement. Her publicist also told EW that the singer, nominated for six Grammys, plans to attend the ceremony next month. —*Simon Vozick-Levinson*

The honeymoon is definitely over for Edmonds and Murphy

FREED

Kiefer Sutherland (*24*), 41, was released from a Glendale, Calif., prison on Jan. 21, after serving 48 days behind bars—his full sentence—for an October DUI conviction. The actor will remain on probation until 2012 and must attend an alcohol-education program.

COURTS

Three former DEA agents filed a $55 million defamation suit against NBC Universal on Jan. 16 in NYC. They refute the claim in the epilogue to the company's film *American Gangster* that "three-quarters of New York City's Drug Enforcement Agency" were convicted on corruption charges between 1973 and 1985, following the events depicted in the movie. *Gangster* chronicles the clash between real-life heroin kingpin Frank Lucas, played by Denzel Washington, and New Jersey detective Richie Roberts, played by Russell Crowe. A rep for NBC Universal did not return calls for comment.

DEATHS

Musician John Stewart, 68, a member of the Kingston Trio and composer of the Monkees' 1967 hit "Daydream Believer," after suffering a stroke, Jan. 19, in San Diego.... Jazz bassist Earl May, 80, who played with greats like Charlie Parker, of a pulmonary embolism, Jan. 4, in South Orange, N.J.... Actress Lois Nettleton, 80, who starred in a 1973 Broadway revival of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and appeared on TV shows like *The Golden Girls*, of complications from lung cancer, Jan. 18, in Woodland Hills, Calif. —*Adam Markovitz, with additional reporting by Stewart Allen*

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HEATH LEDGER
1979 – 2008

Fallen Star

With his fearless role in the Oscar-winning 'Brokeback Mountain,' the Aussie actor became far more than just a pretty face. Now with his untimely death, a career—and a life—ends too soon.

BY JOSH ROTTENBERG

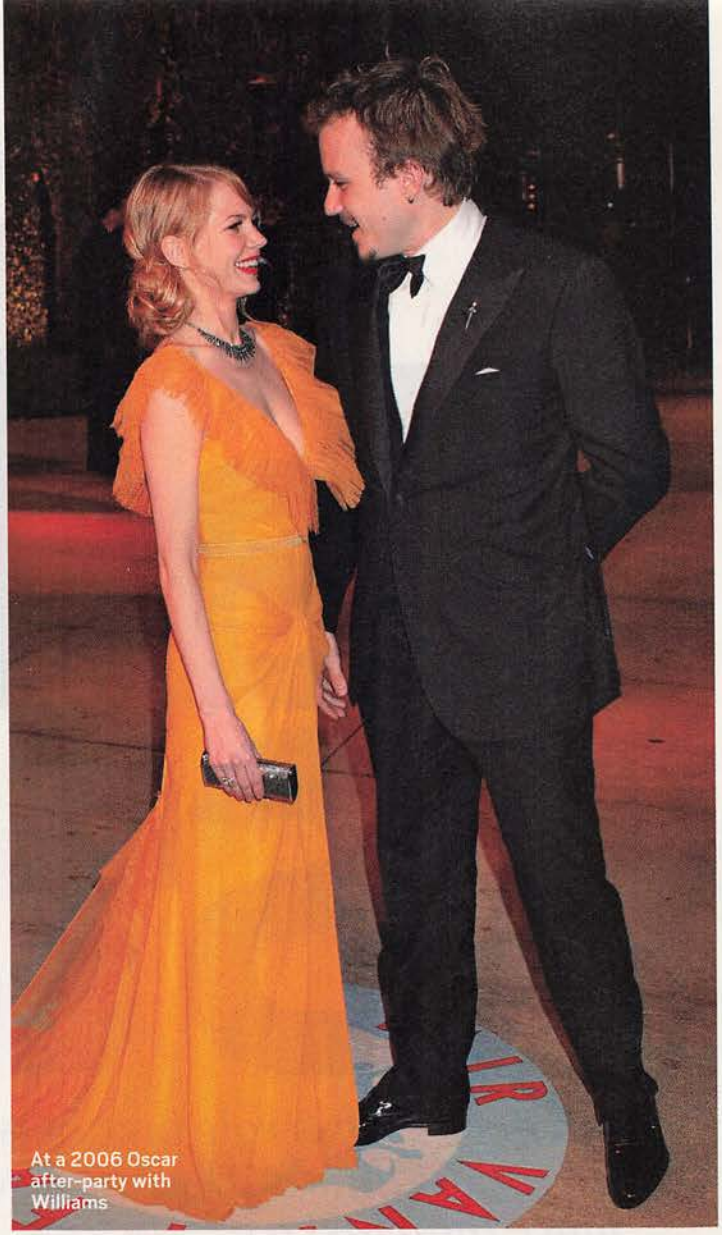
In the spring of 2001, Heath Ledger sat at the bar in New York City's Regency Hotel, perched on the precipice of a kind of fame he wasn't sure he wanted. The 22-year-old Australian actor was about to appear in his first leading role in a Hollywood summer tentpole, a splashy rock & roll jousting movie called *A Knight's Tale*, and the newfound attention seemed to make him uncomfortable. As he spoke with a reporter for this magazine, he chain-smoked Camel Lights, fidgeted, and doodled with crayons on cocktail napkins, pressing so hard that the paper ripped. He said that the first time he'd seen his image on the movie's poster, wearing full medieval armor and a hard stare, he felt so nervous he shook. Out in Hollywood, many were busily mapping out his future for him: big-dollar paydays, hordes of screaming fans trailing his every move, spandex-clad-superhero roles. In fact, he had already been offered the starring role in the newly launched *Spider-Man* franchise and turned it down. ("I just don't care for comics," he said matter-of-factly. "It would have been stealing someone else's dream.") In the face of all of Hollywood's promises and pressures, Ledger seemed to have his eyes on something more ethereal and indefinable. "I'm on a f- - - ing journey," he said. "I'm on a walkabout. A lot of people think ambition or success, and they think dollars.... *My* success is getting underneath that. At the f- - - ing end of the day, that's the only thing you're going to carry with you when you die."

Tragically, that journey ended on the afternoon of Jan. 22, when the actor was found dead at age 28 in his rented apartment in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood.

AGENCY: CORBIS OUTLINE

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

With *I'm Not There* director Haynes last November



At a 2006 Oscar after-party with Williams

> "Heath was a true artist, a deeply sensitive man, an explorer, gifted and wise beyond his years."
> —TODD HAYNES

Ledger was discovered naked in his bed by a housekeeper and a masseuse who had arrived for a regular appointment, a package of "prescription-type" sleeping pills nearby. (In a *New York Times* interview last November, Ledger had complained of having difficulty sleeping due to stress, to the point where a double dose of Ambien would only buy him an hour of rest.) There were no illegal drugs in the apartment, chief police spokesman Paul J. Browne reported, no evidence of foul play, and no initial indication of suicide. Pending an autopsy, it was unclear at press time what caused his death and whether prescription medications played a role.

The tragedy struck in the midst of an already hectic day in the entertainment industry, as Hollywood reacted to the morning's announcement of the Oscar nominations and the latest buzz emanating from Sundance. But word spread with lightning speed via cell phones and BlackBerries, and in nearly every case was met with disbelief. One high-ranking studio exec, after receiving an e-mail stating that Ledger was dead, quickly wrote back: "What—you mean his career?" Charlize Theron learned the news while walking a red carpet at Sundance. Josh Hartnett was blindsided at a Sundance Q&A by a question about Ledger's death; he struggled to answer even as the crowd jeered the man who had asked it. The passing of an actor in his prime—he earned his first Oscar nomination at age 26 for Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* and was just months away from reinventing the Joker in the highly anticipated *Batman Begins* sequel, *The Dark Knight*—seemed too shocking to absorb at first, while at the same time painfully familiar. Within minutes of the story breaking, some 300 entertainment reporters, cameramen, photographers, and fans began to descend on Ledger's building, creating a tableau that resembled a grisly perversion of a movie premiere. Bystanders snapped photos on cellphones and paparazzi climbed the fire escape of the building across the street hoping for shots into Ledger's fourth-floor loft. "It's crazy—he was so young," said one stunned observer.

The tributes came quickly and from the heart. "I had such great hope for him. He was just taking off and to lose his life at such a young age is a tragic loss," Mel Gibson, who costarred with Ledger in *The Patriot*, said in a statement. "This is an unimaginable tragedy," echoed director Todd Haynes, who cast Ledger as one of many Bob Dylans in last year's idiosyncratic biopic *I'm Not There*. "Heath was a true artist, a deeply sensitive man, an explorer, gifted and wise beyond his years." At press time, there was no comment from actress Michelle Williams,

LEDGER AND HAYNES: DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/WIREIMAGE; WITH WILLIAMS: GREGG DEGUIRE/WIREIMAGE.COM

1999
10 Things I Hate About You

2001
A Knight's Tale

2005
Brokeback Mountain

2003
Ned Kelly

2005
Casanova

2006
Candy

2007
I'm Not There

July 2008
The Dark Knight

The Roles of A Lifetime

Our critic remembers the highlights of a promising star's far-too-short career.

BY LISA SCHWARZBAUM

Early in his career, Heath Ledger fretted about being typecast as a young blond heartthrob. He played one on TV in his native Australia, and he made his Hollywood movie debut in 1999 as a cheeky Aussie hunk in *10 Things I Hate About You*, a teen-friendly variation on *The Taming of the Shrew*. But Ledger wanted to do more, and go deeper.

Six years later, he showed just how deep he could go. In his career-high performance as Ennis Del Mar in *Brokeback Mountain*, the alluringly restless actor with the wary, old eyes seemed to have skinned everything extraneous from the shape of the conflicted man he played. His Ennis moved economically, with a minimum of talk that masked a maximum of hunger. Speaking in a mumbled Western drawl from way back in his throat, the bloke born in Perth, Western Australia, busted out of all conventions to play a Wyoming herder, a husband to a bewildered wife, a father, and a man sideswiped by the love and lust he felt for another man.

Ledger always had that coiled intensity in him—just watch him in *The Patriot* (2000). He was so eager to distance himself from cutie-boy roles that he readily hoisted a musket, fought the British redcoats, and accepted Mel Gibson as his father. In *A Knight's Tale* (2001), Ledger was under pressure to deliver his first big Hollywood role—often a mixed blessing for young actors—and he managed to charm, even if it meant flirting once more with his *Tiger Beat* cred as a medieval serf–turned–bitchin' knight. By *Ned Kelly* (2003), about the 19th-century Australian outlaw, the actor had begun to more confidently explore the real dark side of male lawlessness. This was an actor, not just somebody playing dress-up.

I happened to love Ledger in the hastily dismissed *Casanova* (2005), largely because of his wit in the title role. And while I loathed the glam-grubbiness of the addict pic *Candy* (2006), I couldn't take my eyes off him for the abandon with which he inhabited such sickly skin. For now we can savor a fully engaged Ledger who vanishes into one of the six imagined "Bob Dylans" in Todd Haynes' adventurous biopic *I'm Not There*. The achievement, and the movie title, are all the more poignant for what they tease of future excellence, interrupted.

10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU: RICHARD CARTWRIGHT; A KNIGHT'S TALE: EGON ENDRENYI; BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN: KIMBERLY FRENCH; I'M NOT THERE: JONATHAN WENK

who met Ledger on the set of *Brokeback Mountain*, gave birth to the couple's 2-year-old daughter, Matilda, and shared a Brooklyn brownstone with the actor until they split up last September. Ledger's family, however, released a statement confirming his "very tragic, untimely and accidental passing.... Heath has touched so many people on so many different levels during his short life but few had the pleasure of truly knowing him."

All this made for an unlikely end for a star deliberately removed from the Hollywood maelstrom that seemed to consume the likes of River Phoenix and, more recently, Brad Renfro. At once baby-faced and grizzled, with a low, gravelly voice and a smile that could be alternately impish and melancholy, Ledger moved easily between roles and genres and wove an unpredictable course through Hollywood, constantly pivoting from romantic comedies (*10 Things I Hate About You, Casanova*) to period epics (*The Patriot, The Four Feathers*), and from action films (*A Knight's Tale*) to dramas (*Monster's Ball, I'm Not There*). His biggest fear, it seemed, was to be pinned down. "I have no plan of attack," he told EW in 2006. "I like for it to fall from the sky and land in my lap."

That unconventional streak made Ledger irresistible to many of Hollywood's most adventurous filmmakers, including *Brokeback* director Lee, *The Brothers Grimm*'s Terry Gilliam (with whom he was midway through shooting what would be his final project, *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*), and Christopher Nolan, who completed principal photography on *The Dark Knight* last summer. "I met with Heath a couple of times over the years, but nothing really panned out until *The Dark Knight*," Nolan told EW on the Chicago set last year. "The first time I met him, I remember him explaining to me that he wanted to take his time as a young actor. He didn't want to be thrust center stage before he achieved what he wanted to achieve. To be perfectly honest, that's a line I've heard from a lot of young actors. But he's the only one that I then paid 10 dollars to go see do something really extraordinary—which was *Brokeback Mountain*. That was an incredible performance—such lack of vanity, such immersion. As an actor, Heath is fearless."

Occasionally, that fearlessness bordered on recklessness. During the filming of 2002's *The Four Feathers*, one scene called for Ledger's character, a British officer in 19th-century Sudan, to jump on a galloping horse amidst a stampede of 100 horses. Over the stunt coordinator's objections, Ledger insisted on doing the stunt himself. "Heath came to me and said, 'I think I'm going to jump,' " director Shekhar Kapur said at the time. "I said, 'Heath, you could die.' We had just done the scene the day before in which another character says, 'I will die if it's God's will.' So Heath said to me, 'Shekhar, I will die if it's God's will.' "

From the beginning, Ledger demonstrated an unusually high tolerance for risk. Born in 1979 in the Western Australian city of Perth to a mining engineer father and a French-teacher mother, he left home at 16 on a 2,700-mile trip to Sydney with virtually no money and a vague notion of breaking into acting. Following several roles in Australian TV shows and indie films, Ledger landed a role on the Fox series *Roar*, a sort of teen-hunk version of *Braveheart*, with Ledger as a young warrior. "Heath was a complete unknown, but everybody fell in love with him," remembers Tom Thayer, former president of Universal Television. "He was very green, but he had raw energy and this incredible charm." The show was soon canceled, but it helped propel Ledger, who moved to L.A. at 19, to his first major Hollywood film, playing opposite Julia Stiles in the 1999 high school romantic comedy *10 Things I Hate About You*.

Predictably, offers for similar locker-pinup

In His Own Words

EW interviewed Ledger many times over the years, and his voice always came through loud and clear. A sampling.

"I hadn't been in front of a camera in a year, and I'm facing Mel Gibson.... I was delusional. But after one day I saw that Mel was super-relaxed—then it was a walk in the park."
The Patriot 2000

"[Columbia] invested money in me in *The Patriot* and said, 'Okay... let's get another product, let's promote it, and let's bring in the bucks.' Slightly f---ing frustrating."
A Knight's Tale 2001

"It's deep, deep, deep. It's not a movie that teenagers are supposed to come in and understand. It's, like, beyond that."
The Four Feathers 2002

"[Director] Terry [Gilliam] gives you the freedom to just be eccentric and to be bad. He allows you to be bad to the point where you find brilliance. You feel like you can do anything and he just wants you to go to absolute limits."
The Brothers Grimm 2005

"Forget the gayness, forget the label. It's just two people. We both knew that...and we were also up to doing it. We were like, f--- it. We took on this story, there's no point in shying away from it now."
Brokeback Mountain 2005

"I feel the topic [of drug use] has been overexposed through literature and music and film of course, and I feel like we *all* know how to portray a junkie at this point."
Candy 2006

"I'm definitely more excited about this than any other film I've been a part of. I'm really curious to see how it turns out. It's either going to be an absolute masterpiece, or [*laughing*] a complete flop."
I'm Not There 2007

"I enjoy falling behind masks. I enjoy really dressing up and stepping into someone else's shoes. I know it's going to require a wild dance, and it's going to be really sinister and very dark. It's nothing I've done before."
The Dark Knight 2008

SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

Ledger's take on the Joker in *The Dark Knight*

roles began pouring in. Ledger, however, chose more eclectic projects, such as the big-budget Revolutionary War epic *The Patriot*, the brooding indie *Monster's Ball*, and the Australian period drama *Ned Kelly*. In his own mind, and perhaps in the minds of many in Hollywood, his career wasn't quite cohering, but in 2005, with Gilliam's messy fairy tale *The Brothers Grimm*, he felt things click into place. "Up to that point I'd been in a really self-destructive mode with my career—quite intentionally, actually," he told EW. "I wasn't doing anything that was testing me. I was just on the ride I'd been put on and I got bored, quite frankly. Terry was the first director who saw me for what I could do. He challenged me and I was ready to earn my career and start over, essentially."

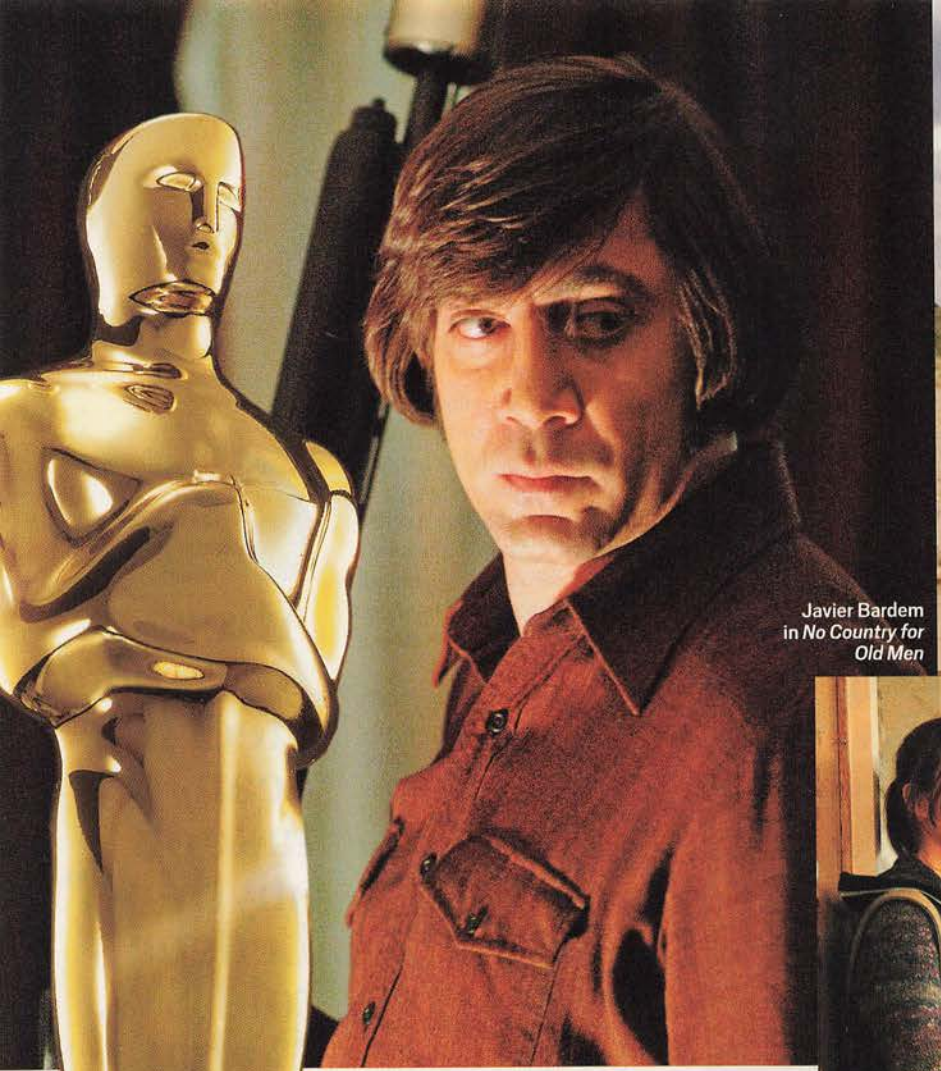
Later that year, Ledger's performance in *Brokeback Mountain* would redefine his career beyond anyone's imagining. As Ennis Del Mar, a laconic cowboy who begins an impassioned and ultimately tragic love affair with the more gregarious Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal), Ledger delivered a performance that shattered stereotypes many moviegoers might have had about homosexuality and helped propel the film from a potentially niche-market "gay cowboy movie" to an $83 million-grossing cultural phenomenon. In the process, Ledger changed not only the industry's sense of his abilities but his own sense of himself. "After *Brokeback* I feel like I can take on anything," he said. "What could be more challenging or scary? Nothing scares me now."

Emboldened by *Brokeback*, last year Ledger took on the further challenges of playing a heroin-addicted poet in the indie *Candy* and the hallowed icon Bob Dylan in *I'm Not There*. With his role as the psychopathic, murderous Joker in *The Dark Knight*, however, he faced down the thing he'd seemed intent on avoiding in his earlier years: a starring role in a massive Hollywood franchise. Having tasted the bitter side of celebrity—the incessant prying into his offscreen relationships with actresses Heather Graham, Naomi Watts, and Williams—Ledger must have found the prospect of playing a leading role in such a high-profile enterprise daunting.

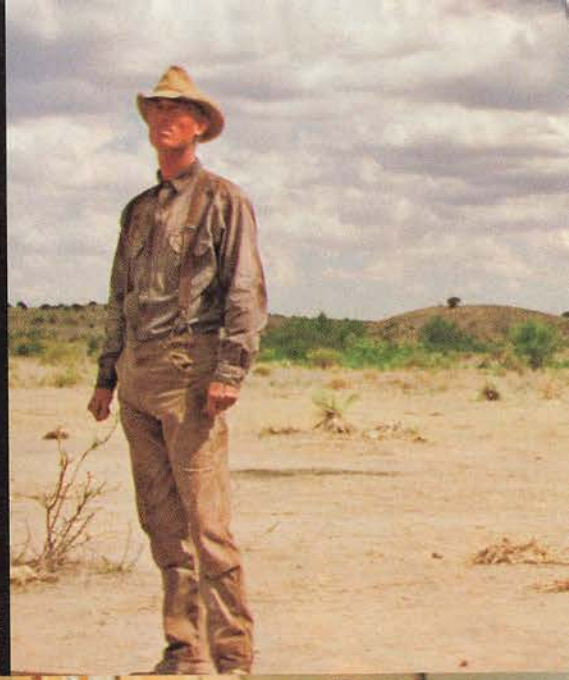
For Warner Bros., which plans to release *The Dark Knight* this summer, Ledger's death will create awkward marketing challenges. The studio has not yet announced any intention to alter its plans for the film, which is in postproduction, and issued a statement that it was "stunned and devastated by this tragic news." Nor is it clear what will become of Gilliam's *Imaginarium*, which had wrapped one stage of filming in England but was set to resume shortly in Vancouver. What seems certain, however, is that, for most moviegoers, *The Dark Knight* will stand as the final complete performance of Ledger's career. And, sadly—or, perhaps, fittingly, for an actor who seemed so intent on remaining elusive despite his growing fame—his face will be obscured by makeup as thick as a mask. ■ *(Additional reporting by Jeff Jensen, Gregory Kirschling, Jeff Labrecque, Whitney Pastorek, Lynette Rice, Lindsay Soll, Christine Spines, Benjamin Svetkey, Adam B. Vary, and Kate Ward)*

"After *Brokeback*, I feel like I can take on anything," Ledger told EW. "What could be more challenging or scary? Nothing scares me now."

STEPHEN VAUGHAN



Javier Bardem in *No Country for Old Men*

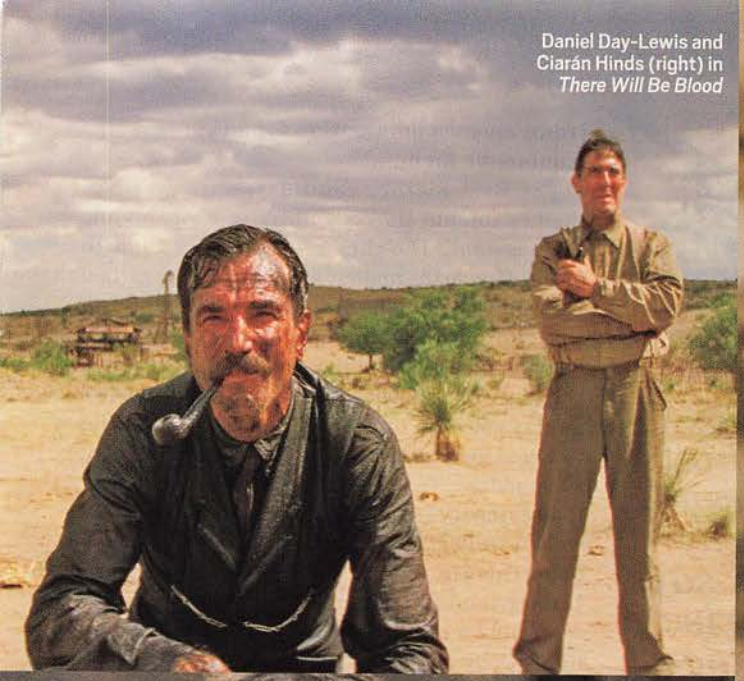


Ellen Page and Michael Cera in *Juno*

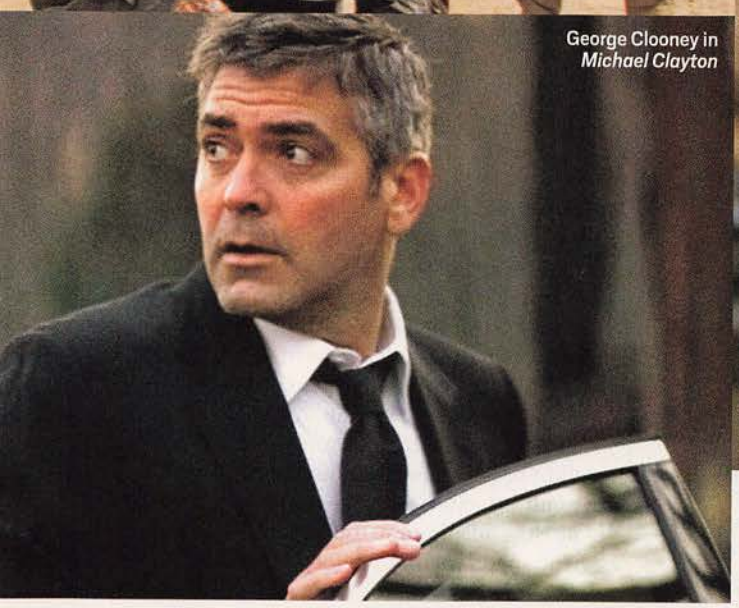
Blood, Sweat, and Cheers

A wide-open Oscar race is finally coming into focus. But a lot of mystery remains, especially surrounding the ceremony itself. The newly minted nominees talk about their shock and joy—and their backup plans for Feb. 24.

By Dave Karger



Daniel Day-Lewis and Ciarán Hinds (right) in *There Will Be Blood*



George Clooney in *Michael Clayton*

James McAvoy and Keira Knightley in *Atonement*

Where is Michael Clayton when we need him? Surely George Clooney's crisis-fixer character would know how to solve the strike-related impasse that's jeopardizing this year's Oscar ceremony. Or perhaps Javier Bardem's *No Country for Old Men* hitman could just sort of *stare* all parties into submission. Wait, scratch that: Cutie-pie Juno MacGuff would need mere minutes to charm them into a hasty settlement.

If only. Oscar-nomination day was filled with its usual excitement and hoopla, but the writers' strike cast a cloud of uncertainty over the proceedings this year, with many nominees wondering if they'll even get the opportunity to dress up and head to the Kodak Theatre on Feb. 24. "Maybe the talks will be so far along, [the Writers Guild] will grant a waiver," speculated *Michael Clayton*'s Tony Gilroy, who scored nods for Best Director and Best Original Screenplay. "Maybe the strike will be over. Maybe there'll be some other accommodation. But in the end, as much as you'd love to go make a speech, there are so many people that this strike is so crucial for. You try to keep it in perspective."

Gilroy wasn't the only first-time nominee with mixed emotions. "There's that moment where you think, 'Oh great, new dress!'" said *Lars and the Real Girl* screenwriter Nancy Oliver. "And then that other moment where you go, 'Oh, well, maybe not.' But so many people are hurting, and I'm more concerned about that than a party, to tell you the truth. It would be a glamorous Hollywood moment, but I'd rather have a fair deal."

All year the Oscar race has felt wide open, and, not surprisingly, the Academy ended up spreading its big nominations out among a lot of contenders, many of them the violent type. Leading the pack were the watch-through-your-fingers duo of *No Country for Old Men* and *There Will Be Blood*, which received eight nods each. While vacationing with friends in Europe, Best Supporting Actor front-runner Bardem marveled over all the acclaim his performance has garnered. "You go to a movie set, you cut your hair into that haircut, you do the job, and suddenly, people like it," he

said. "It's out of your hands or your control."

Close behind these two were *Clayton* and *Atonement*, with seven nominations apiece. After watching his thriller go 0 for 4 at the Golden Globes and miss out on a Best Cast nomination from the Screen Actors Guild Awards, Gilroy talked about how unpredictable this year's awards season is turning out to be. "If you think about it, it's the same thing that's going on in the presidential race," he said. "Usually by now someone's locked something up." Indeed, this year will go down as the one where the pre-Oscar awards didn't add up. For the first time in the history of the usually prescient SAG Awards, only one of the Best Cast nominees (*No Country*) made it to the Best Picture race.

Atonement producer Paul Webster, meanwhile, found himself representing the only Best Picture nominee that failed to earn any recognition for its director. "More than anybody else, this is his movie," Webster said of Joe Wright. "His stamp is all over it. It kind of makes a nonsense of the process in a way. Personally, I would happily trade my own nomination for a Best Director nomination for him."

"Oh, I completely gave up. I didn't think it was possible, I really didn't," says surprise nominee Linney.

The Best Picture candidates are a heavy-themed lot, but the one source of levity among them is *Juno*. The cheapest of the five films to make, it's also the highest grossing, having earned $87 million so far. The film collected nods for Best Director (Jason Reitman), Best Actress (Ellen Page), and Best Original Screenplay (Diablo Cody). "I really woke up just to hear Ellen's and Diablo's names get read out loud," said Reitman, who watched the announcements from his hotel room at Sundance. "As they were going to the directors' category I said, 'Oh, just blow by this, could we get to Best Picture already?' And then my name came up and my wife just burst into tears. Unless you just became a father you probably can't hold a candle to the way I'm feeling right now." Cody had a similar reaction: "I screamed myself hoarse. I've grown up watching the Coen brothers' films. They're heroes to me. *There Will Be Blood* was my favorite film of the year. It's cool to be the Academy's comic relief!"

After being stiffed by the SAG Awards, the Globes, the Critics Choice Awards, and even the Spirit Awards, Best Actress nominee Laura Linney had to laugh as well. "Oh, I completely gave up," reported the elated *Savages* star from Telluride, Colo., where she was on vacation with her fiancé, Marc Schauer. "I didn't think it was possible, I really didn't. My agent, Toni Howard, kept saying, 'It's gonna happen! It's gonna happen!' And I was like, 'Ucchhh, no, it's not!'" Surprise Best Actor nominee Tommy Lee Jones claims he didn't even know the nominations were being announced—and we believe him. "My wife woke me up this morning and told me about it," said Jones, who made the list for the $6.8 million-grossing *In the Valley of Elah*. "It could be that more DVD screeners were sent out than tickets were sold at the box office!"

Professional obligations kept 82-year-old first-time nominee Hal Holbrook from sharing the moment with his wife, actress Dixie Carter. "We were hoping to wake up early in the morning together and be told some good news," said the *Into the Wild* actor. But instead of putting on a pot of coffee with her in Los Angeles, he found himself in New York during the big reveal—at a television studio, no less: Holbrook was scheduled to be on the *Today* show minutes after being nominated. "There was this request to come here and promote the film, because it's being rereleased to give it another shot."

The announcements also provided an instant trove of Oscar-history gems: Cate Blanchett's dual Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress nods (for *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* and *I'm Not There*, respectively) made her the third double acting nominee of the decade (after Julianne Moore and

'Butterfly' Kisses

We asked Julian Schnabel, Oscar-nominated director of the French-language biopic 'The Diving Bell and the Butterfly,' whom he'd like to thank in the event he wins and doesn't get to make a speech. Or doesn't win and doesn't get to make a speech. In any case, he had gratitude to spare. —Clark Collis

"Well, I'd love to thank [star] Mathieu Amalric, who, because he was invisible in the movie, didn't get nominated for anything, but, without him, I wouldn't be talking to you. He gave a great performance. And Max von Sydow. And all the actresses [*he recites all their names*]. I'd like to thank [*Diving Bell*'s subject] Jean-Dominique Bauby and Florence, his girlfriend—she really helped me with this thing. I'd like to thank all the people at the hospital and the patients who helped me understand this stuff [about Bauby's locked-in syndrome]. I'd like to congratulate Paul Thomas Anderson and Daniel Day-Lewis and Johnny Depp and Michael—I was going to say *Michael Clayton*! [*Laughs*] And Tony Gilroy and George Clooney. Obviously I'd like to congratulate the Coen brothers and Javier Bardem, who deserved an Oscar when we made *Before Night Falls*. And [*No Country for Old Men* star] Josh Brolin, who didn't get nominated for anything but, without him, you wouldn't have a whole movie. He did a great job. I'd like to congratulate and thank Sean Penn. I would like to thank Johnny Depp [who was originally due to star in *Diving Bell*] for actually getting me the job to direct this movie. They asked him to play this role and he said he would if Julian Schnabel directed it. I'd like to thank everybody that had anything to do with it. [*Laughs*] Is that my speech, man?"

(PP. 28–29) OSCAR® STATUETTES AMPAS® PHOTOGRAPH BY KEATE; *NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN*: RICHARD FOREMAN; *JUNO*: DOANE GREGORY; *ATONEMENT*: ALEX BAILEY (P. 30) SCHNABEL: ARMANDO GALLOWAY/NA LIU

Jamie Foxx), while her nomination for *Elizabeth* means she's the first woman ever to snag two nods for playing the same character in two different films (Paul Newman, Al Pacino, Peter O'Toole, and Bing Crosby had all pulled off the feat before). Cinematographer Roger Deakins, who shot *No Country* and *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, became the first director of photography since 1972 to score two nominations in the same year; he heard the news while shooting his next project, the Meryl Streep drama *Doubt*. "Meryl came up and congratulated me," Deakins said. "She said, 'You're the Cate Blanchett of our set!'"

Meanwhile, *No Country*'s Joel and Ethan Coen joined Warren Beatty as the only artists ever to receive simultaneous nominations in four different categories. They were cited for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, and—under their alias, Roderick Jaynes—Best Editing. In the screenplay categories, this year marks the first time four of the 10 Oscar-recognized scripts were written entirely by women: Cody, Oliver, *The Savages*' Tamara Jenkins, and *Away From Her*'s Sarah Polley. And *Enchanted*'s Alan Menken and Stephen Schwartz became the first triple Best Song nominees since all the way back in...well, last year, when *Dreamgirls*' Henry Krieger scored the same hat trick.

For now, the most pressing bit of Oscar history-in-the-making involves whether or not the ceremony will go on as usual. "We're moving forward with plans for our show for the 24th," said Academy spokesperson Leslie Unger. "Our producer is thinking about alternatives given various scenarios. It is our sincere hope to do our show as we normally do."

Still, some major players couldn't help dreaming up contingency plans. Brad Bird, a Best Animated Film nominee for *Ratatouille*, endorsed the idea of a private, nontelevised ceremony: "That's how the Oscars began. It was just a bunch of people in the industry having dinner and drinking a little and trying to pat each other on the back for good work. At the heart of it, that's what it is and should be," he said. "But you know, we're sitting here kibitzing as if we're in control of this. Like, 'I know what! We could actually go to an island somewhere that has no jurisdiction, and therefore we wouldn't actually be crossing any picket lines!'"

Michael Moore, who earned a Best Documentary nod for *Sicko* and is a member of the WGA, was a bit more optimistic. "I think the studios and the producers are going to have to come back to the table and be reasonable and settle this," he said. "What are we asking for? Like, four pennies? Something like that? These are not unreasonable requests, and I think cooler heads on the studios' part will now prevail because they certainly wouldn't want the Oscars to be canceled."

Not that some nominees would necessarily mind. "Part of me would be a little relieved because it means you don't have to make that incredibly long plane journey," said *Michael Clayton* Best Supporting Actor nominee (and London resident) Tom Wilkinson. If the ceremony is, in fact, called off, Oscar's class of 2008 is already thinking of alternate plans for how they'll spend the night. "If they don't happen? I'll sit in a nice gown, even if I'm in my living room," said *Gone Baby Gone* Best Supporting Actress nominee Amy Ryan. "All dressed up and nowhere to go!" *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*'s Best Director nominee Julian Schnabel said he'd hit the waves: "I'll go surfing. I don't know where. I could go down to Mexico. There ought to be a south swell around that time." *(Additional reporting by Jennifer Armstrong, Clark Collis, Steve Daly, Josh Rottenberg, and Kate Ward)*

Response Time

Oscar nominees share their thoughts about the good news—and the uncertainty surrounding the awards ceremony.

"It would be extremely exciting to go to the Academy Awards. But if it doesn't happen, it just doesn't happen. It's as simple as that. I'll move on." —Best Actress nominee Ellen Page

"It's all Kmart, actually. The Big & Tall shop at Kmart." —Michael Moore, director of Best Documentary nominee *Sicko*, on who he was wearing the day nominations were announced

"I do not know what is 'bummer.'" —Charmingly French Best Actress nominee Marion Cotillard, on whether it's a bummer that her first nomination comes during a year in which the Oscar ceremony is in jeopardy

"It would be sad for everybody if they can't come up with something to resolve it in time. I'm not a big fan of electronics—it's somewhat of an uncertain area for me—but I understand there's a great deal of money going to be made out of this new form of media transference, millions and billions of dollars, and I just don't understand why people don't want to share it." —Best Supporting Actor nominee Hal Holbrook on his view of the strike

"It was completely unexpected and consequently a little more delicious. I'll give a good yell down the slope when I hit the sled." —Laura Linney, who learned of her Best Actress nomination while vacationing in Telluride, Colo.

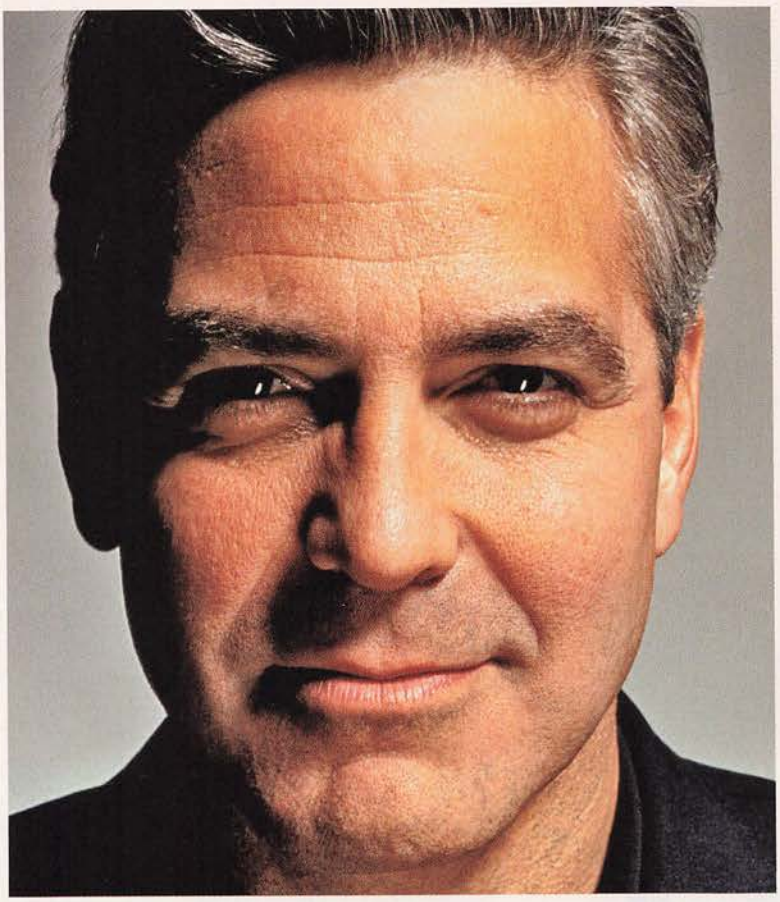
"I'm a member of five unions. So I could wind up on strike against myself before too long." —*In the Valley of Elah* Best Actor nominee Tommy Lee Jones

"Look, I'm someone who never drinks. I'm about the most boring human being alive. But I will absolutely come to your place and have a drink that night." —Oscar-nominated *Juno* director Jason Reitman, asked if he'd join EW for a cocktail on Feb. 24 if the ceremony falls through

If the Oscars don't happen? "I'll sit in a nice gown, even if I'm in my living room," says nominee Amy Ryan.

PAGE: JOHN SPELLMAN/RETNA LTD.

Best Actor



GEORGE CLOONEY

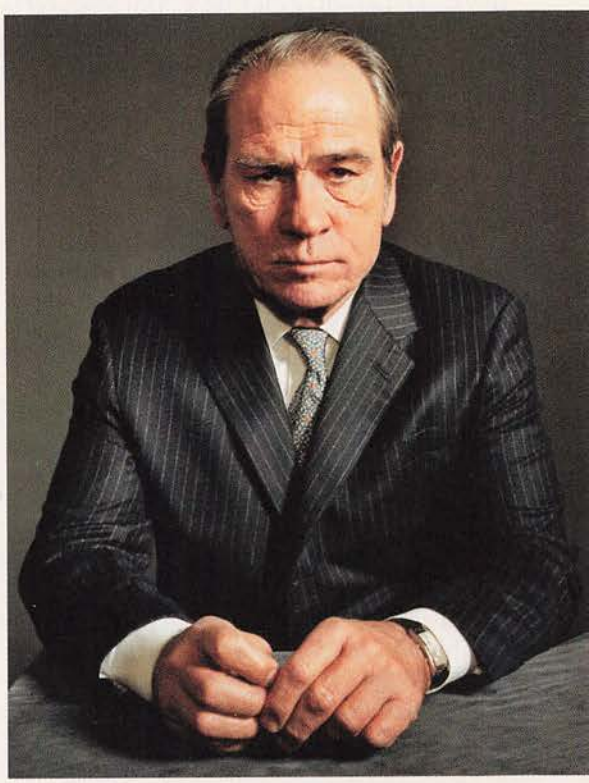
Michael Clayton

Age 46 **Role** See title, above. **Oscar History** He won Best Supporting Actor two years ago for *Syriana* and was nominated the same year for Best Director and Best Original Screenplay for *Good Night, and Good Luck.* **Cutting-Room Floor** Clooney's divorced "fixer" character originally had a girlfriend. "We shot it with Jennifer Ehle—she gave a wonderful performance," says Clooney. "And the more we did it, we realized you have to isolate this character more. And having a girlfriend, he's not in as much trouble." Clooney wrote Ehle a note to apologize for the excision: "I didn't cut it, but I still felt bad about it." **Up Next** He stars in his third directorial effort, the football comedy *Leatherheads* (out April 4). He's also wrapped the Coen brothers caper *Burn After Reading* with Brad Pitt and *Clayton* costar Tilda Swinton, and has lent his voice to Wes Anderson's upcoming animated film *The Fantastic Mr. Fox.* —*Dave Karger*

TOMMY LEE JONES

In the Valley of Elah

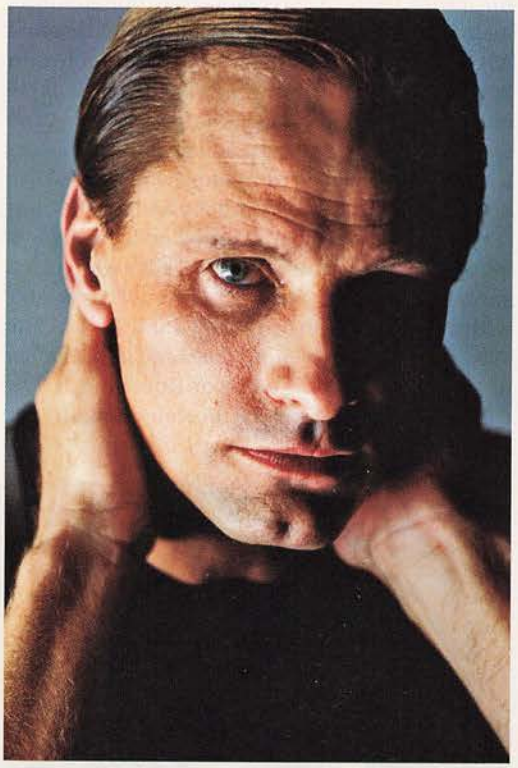
Age 61 **Role** Hank Deerfield, father of a missing U.S. soldier. **Oscar History** He won Best Supporting Actor for 1993's *The Fugitive*; also nominated for 1991's *JFK*. **Practice Makes Perfect** Director Paul Haggis wasn't put off by the actor's tough reputation. "I'd heard some of the stories how he could face down directors," Haggis says. "But he loves to take direction. He isn't the type of person who would do two takes and say, 'Why should we do a third?' He'd keep going because he knows he can do something better." **Box Office Blues** "Yeah, it's a disappointment," Jones says of the film's $6.8 million domestic gross. "I'd like as many people to see it as possible, but heck, that's not my province." **Up Next** He plays Det. Dave Robicheaux in *In the Electric Mist*, an adaptation of a James Lee Burke novel. —*Gregory Kirschling*



VIGGO MORTENSEN

Eastern Promises

Age 49 **Role** Steely, secretive Russian chauffeur-turned-gangster Nikolai. **Oscar History** First nomination. **Suffering for His Art** Mortensen admits he was nervous shooting the famous nude bathhouse brawl. "They say 'Cut!' I look around and I'm [naked] in a heap in the corner. You feel vulnerable," he says. "But the important thing is to not compromise the scene." It helped that Mortensen felt comfortable with director David Cronenberg, with whom he had worked on *A History of Violence*. "He's a friend, I trust him, and I don't feel exploited." **Up Next** Mortensen has wrapped *Good*, about the rise of Nazism, as well as Ed Harris' Western *Appaloosa*. He'll soon begin the big-screen adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. —*Missy Schwartz*



JOHNNY DEPP

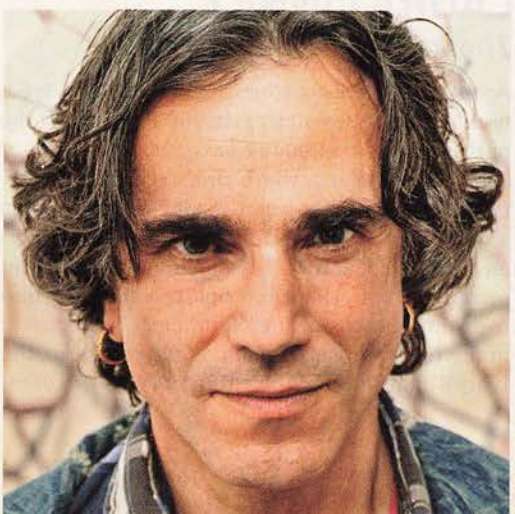
Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Age 44 **Role** A tonsorial ace turned serial killer. **Oscar History** Two previous Best Actor nominations, for 2003's *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* and 2004's *Finding Neverland*. **On Sweeney** "He is beyond dark," Depp says of his psychopathic character. "He's already dead. He's been dead for years." **Finding the Look** Director Tim Burton says it took some effort to keep promotional images of Depp looking as pale as they both intended, because studio executives wanted to inject more color into his face. "It should be a warts-and-all kind of thing," adds Depp. "Almost like a Kabuki mask, almost a white face, with really harsh, drastic lighting on it." **Up Next** He's been keen to star in the redeemed-heroin-addict drama *Shantaram* for several years, but with that project on a strike-induced hold, his most likely next move will be playing '30s gangster John Dillinger in Michael Mann's *Public Enemies*, due in 2009. —*Steve Daly*

DANIEL DAY-LEWIS

There Will Be Blood

Age 50 **Role** Oil prospector Daniel Plainview. **Oscar History** A four-time nominee, he won Best Actor for 1989's *My Left Foot*. His other nods came for 1993's *In the Name of the Father* and 2002's *Gangs of New York*. **Method Madness** "People have such a misconception about what it is I do," the British actor told *The New York Times Magazine* of his famously immersive work ethic. "They think the character comes from staying in the wheelchair or being locked in the jail or whatever extravagant thing they choose to focus their fantasies on.... But that's just the superficial stuff. Most of the movies I do are leading me toward a life that is utterly mysterious to me. My chief goal is to find a way to make that life meaningful to other people." **Up Next** Nothing confirmed. —*Jeff Jensen*



(OPPOSITE PAGE) CLOONEY: NIGEL PARRY/CPI; JONES: MICHAEL LAVINE/CPI; (THIS PAGE) MORTENSEN: BRIGITTE LACOMBE; DEPP: DAN MACMEDAN/CONTOUR FOR GETTY IMAGES; DAY-LEWIS: ROB GREIG/TIME OUT/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA

Best Actress

LAURA LINNEY

The Savages

Age 43 **Role** Self-sabotaging woman-child Wendy Savage. **Oscar History** She was nominated for Best Actress in 2000's *You Can Count on Me* and for Best Supporting Actress in 2004's *Kinsey*. **Game On** "When I got the script, I felt like a chess player looking at the board," recalls Linney. "My mind started to go, lifting the [scenes] up off the page. I made charts and graphs to make sure I didn't miss anything." **Brain Food** "I love how Wendy is manic, self-obsessed, and lies like an 11-year-old, and yet is tremendously empathetic," says Linney. "There's something funny about how smart people can behave. They don't have the tools to do the most basic things for themselves." **Up Next** She plays Abigail Adams in the HBO miniseries *John Adams* in March, then stars in director James Ivory's indie drama *City of Your Final Destination*. —*Christine Spines*

CATE BLANCHETT

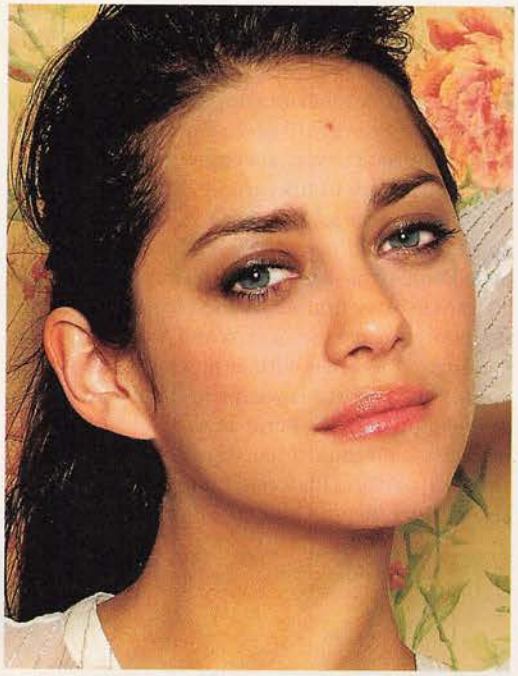
Elizabeth: The Golden Age

Age 38 **Role** English ruler Queen Elizabeth I (reprising her Oscar-nominated role in 1998's *Elizabeth*). **Oscar History** She's a five-time nominee, including two this year. She won the Supporting Actress prize for playing Katharine Hepburn in 2004's *The Aviator* and earned nods for *Elizabeth* and 2006's *Notes on a Scandal*. **Uneasy Lay the Crowned Head** She found it odd revisiting a historical figure she played as a young woman nearly a decade ago. "It was discombobulating," she confesses. "It was like being followed by a shadow quite a lot of the time. The first film was such a surprise to people. No one expected it to register with audiences as strongly as it did." **Up Next** She stars in this May's *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* and then November's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* opposite her *Babel* costar Brad Pitt. —*Steve Daly*

JULIE CHRISTIE

Away From Her

Age 66 **Role** Fiona, a long-married woman stricken with Alzheimer's. **Oscar History** She won Best Actress for 1965's *Darling*; she then snagged two other nominations, for 1971's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and 1997's *Afterglow*. **Playing Hard to Get** Getting the acclaimed British actress to commit to the part wasn't easy. "It took about eight months of phone calls and e-mails and flying to London," says Sarah Polley, the 29-year-old actress who made her feature directorial debut with *Away*. "Even though I was writing the film for her from the beginning, I knew that it was going to take a lot of no's before I got a yes, just because she doesn't say yes that easily." **Up Next** Nothing confirmed. —*Gregory Kirschling*



MARION COTILLARD

La Vie en Rose

Age 32 **Role** Legendary French chanteuse Edith Piaf. **Oscar History** First nomination. **Karaoke Dreamin'** As a teenager in Orléans, France, Cotillard used to lip-synch to Madonna's "Material Girl." "With my microphone, I was the pop star of my bedroom!" she laughs. That clowning turned out to be good practice for her uncanny performance in *La Vie*, which she approached with scientific precision. "I took all the songs and I calculated the length of the notes, of the silences, and how she would breathe. Then I did it again and again and again," Cotillard says. She worked equally hard to nail the way Piaf stood on stage while belting out those tunes. "Even if on screen you don't see my hands or feet, the whole body is involved." **Up Next** She sings—for real this time—in Rob Marshall's *Nine*, based on the Broadway musical adapted from Federico Fellini's *8½*. —*Missy Schwartz*

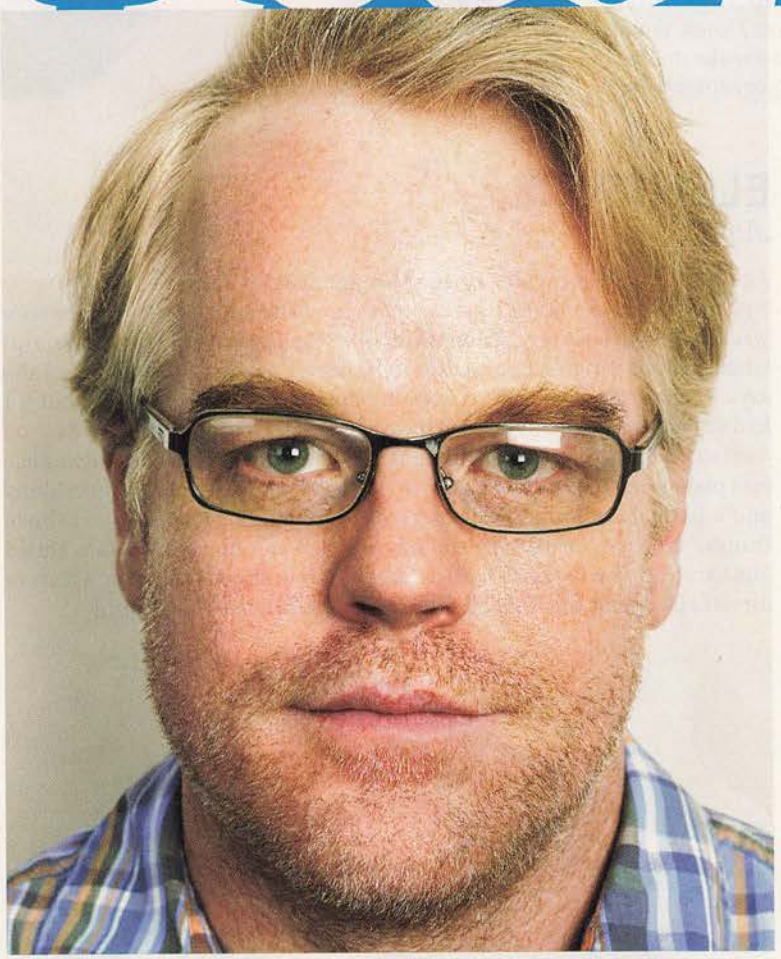
ELLEN PAGE

Juno

Age 20 **Role** Sardonically sincere pregnant teen Juno MacGuff. **Oscar History** First nomination. **High School Crush** Page, who played a young teen wreaking vengeance on a pedophile in *Hard Candy*, first read the *Juno* script when she was a high school senior in Halifax, Canada. "It floored me," she says. "I was literally obsessed with it. I don't cry over spilled milk, but if I hadn't been able to do it, I would have been really disappointed." **What You See Isn't What You Get** When director Jason Reitman was casting *Juno*, Page was playing a starved abuse victim in *An American Crime*. "I was very skinny and a little delusional," Page says. "But he managed to see past those things." **Up Next** April's indie comedy *Smart People* opposite Dennis Quaid and Sarah Jessica Parker. Then she's set to star in Drew Barrymore's feature directorial debut, the Roller Derby comedy *Whip It*. —*Sean Smith*

(OPPOSITE PAGE) LINNEY: PHOTOGRAPH BY ONDREA BARBE; BLANCHETT: ALAN GELATI/CORBIS OUTLINE; (THIS PAGE) CHRISTIE: ANDREW MACPHERSON/CORBIS OUTLINE; COTILLARD: ELIOT BLISS/HAN; PAGE: EMILY SHUR/CORBIS OUTLINE

Best Supporting Actor



PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN

Charlie Wilson's War

Age 40 **Role** Window-smashing CIA agent Gust Avrakotos. **Oscar History** A Best Actor trophy for *Capote* in 2006, his only previous nod. **Why Director Mike Nichols Loves Him** "Phil is arguably the best actor in the world at the moment," says Nichols. **Why Tom Hanks Loves Him** "The scene where I meet Philip for the first time, where he bugs the scotch bottle—we rehearsed it and shot it over the course of probably three and a half days," says Hanks. "It was such a blast, I wished I could have filmed it for seven weeks." **Role Call** Hoffman has a Chinese-menu approach to résumé management: "I just sort of look for projects that strike me as interesting, do a little something over here, pick a little something from over there." **Up Next** He plays a theater director in writer-director Charlie Kaufman's fall comedy *Synecdoche, New York*. Then he'll don a priest's collar for playwright-turned-director John Patrick Shanley's December drama *Doubt*. —*Benjamin Svetkey*

HAL HOLBROOK

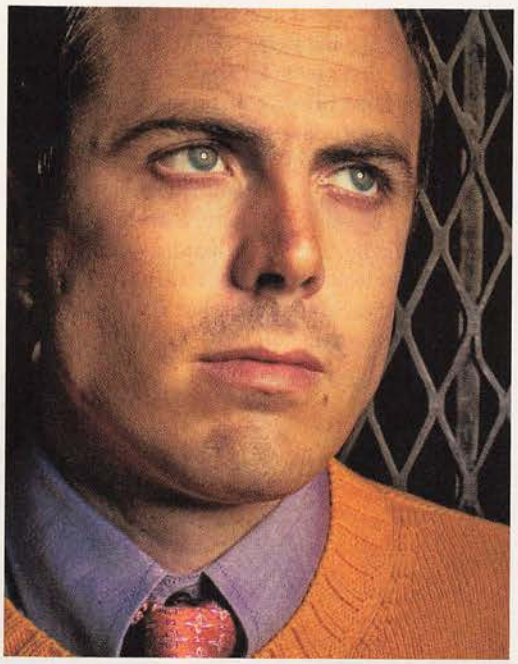
Into the Wild

Age 82 **Role** Ron Franz, a lonely widower who befriends wanderer Chris McCandless (Emile Hirsch). **Oscar History** First nomination. **Never Too Late** Best known for supporting roles in films like *All the President's Men*, *Wall Street*, and *The Firm*, Holbrook never expected to get a part as rich as Franz so late in his career. "Eighty-two years old and you get a job like this?" he says. "It's a miracle." **Not-So-Shallow Hal** *Wild* writer-director Sean Penn—who'd worked with Holbrook in a 1981 TV movie—was floored by the actor's vulnerability in a scene in which Franz and McCandless say goodbye. "I wrote it with as much sensitivity as I could, but I wrote it with the imagination of a 47-year-old prick," Penn says. "Hal took it way beyond what I could understand." **Up Next** He continues to perform his long-running one-man stage show, *Mark Twain Tonight!* —*Josh Rottenberg*

CASEY AFFLECK

The Assassination of Jesse James By the Coward Robert Ford

Age 32 **Role** Robert Ford, superfan turned killer. **Oscar History** His first nomination. **Creepy Role** "I don't think Robert Ford was a stalker or proto-stalker," Affleck says of his character. "He was a kid who was a bit naive and idolized somebody." **Pitt Crew** On *Jesse James*, Affleck had major screen time with Brad Pitt, his nominal costar in all three *Ocean's* movies. "Mostly it's just George [Clooney] and Brad three feet in front of the camera and then me and Scott Caan and the other guys 35 feet away from the camera," Affleck says of the heist franchise. **Man on the Verge** "Casey is the next great leading man," gushes Amy Ryan, costar of *Gone Baby Gone*. Still, she's not above joking about how Affleck landed the lead in brother Ben's directorial debut: "Do you think he slept with the director?" **Up Next** Nothing confirmed. —*Nicole Sperling*



JAVIER BARDEM

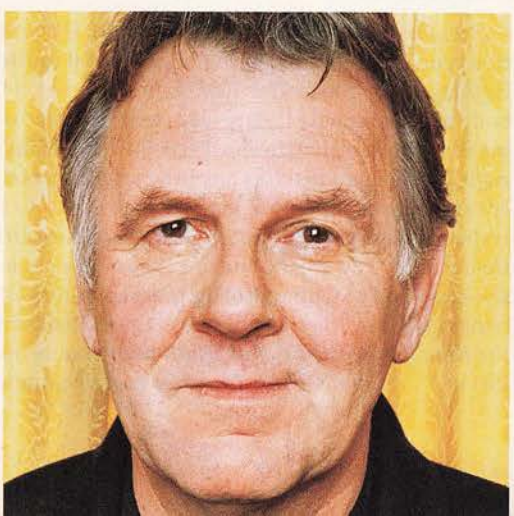
No Country for Old Men

Age 38 **Role** Psychotic killer Anton Chigurh. **Oscar History** He received a Best Actor nomination for 2000's *Before Night Falls*. **Fish Out of Water** The *No Country* shoot wasn't easy for the Spaniard. "I think Javier was a little out of his element," says costar Josh Brolin. Not only was he far from home, but his look for the role—particularly that moptop bowl cut—was enough to discomfit anyone. "When you walk around with a haircut like that," Brolin notes, "it's horrible." Bardem adds that mastering his English dialogue was also a challenge. "It's different to work in a foreign language," he says. "It's like you're putting on a tight suit. It's not something you're comfortable with." Fortunately, the upside appears to be golden: Bardem is the favorite to win in this category. **Up Next** He takes the lead in Woody Allen's Spain-set *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, opposite Scarlett Johansson and Penélope Cruz. —*Gregory Kirschling*

TOM WILKINSON

Michael Clayton

Age 58 **Role** Mentally addled lawyer Arthur Edens. **Oscar History** He had one previous nod, for Best Actor in 2001's *In the Bedroom*. **Tube Ties** Like costar George Clooney, Wilkinson started in TV and is used to breakneck shooting schedules. As a result, "Tom isn't in any way actor-y," says Clooney. **Mad as Hell** "When I read the script, I knew what was going through Arthur's head," says Wilkinson. "Imagine being pushed to the point where you're asked to do something that is in direct conflict with everything you've ever been taught about human decency. It's not unlike *Hamlet*." **Up Next** He portrays Ben Franklin in HBO's March miniseries *John Adams*; a gangster in Guy Ritchie's *RocknRolla*; and a Nazi in the Tom Cruise thriller *Valkyrie* (the latter two due in October). —*Jeff Labrecque*



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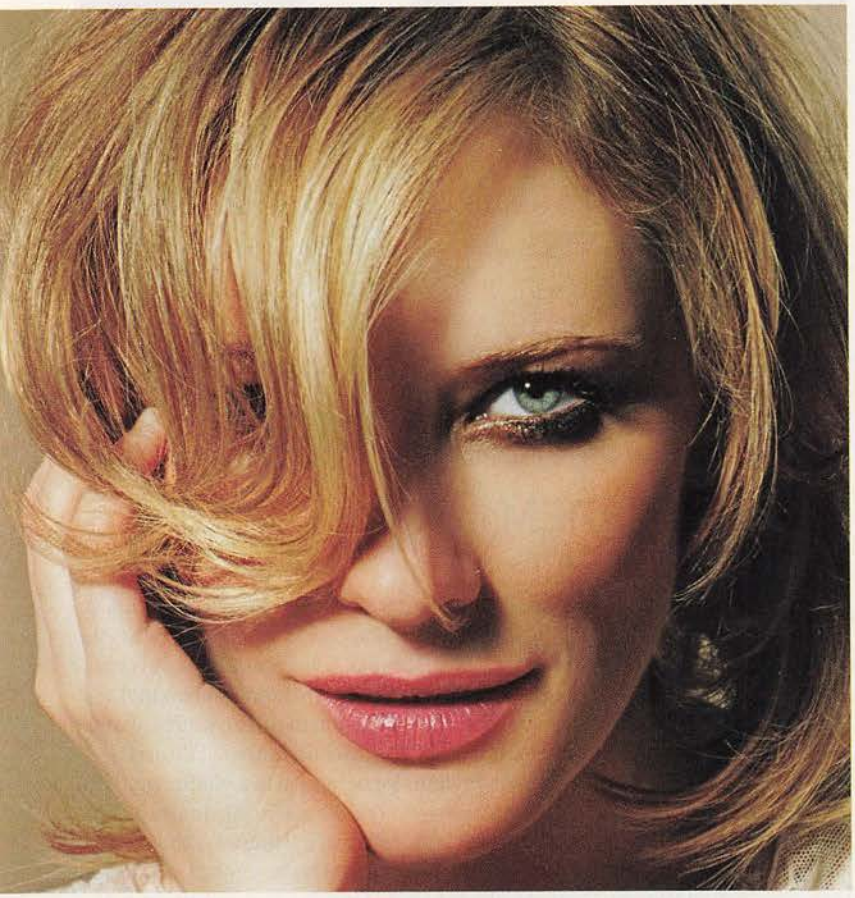
Best Supporting Actress



CATE BLANCHETT

I'm Not There

Age 38 **Role** Jude Quinn (i.e., Bob Dylan). **Oscar History** With her two nods this year, Blanchett brings her career total to five. She won Best Supporting Actress for 2004's *The Aviator*. **Bringing an Icon to Life** "I didn't want anybody to impersonate Dylan," says writer-director Todd Haynes about casting Blanchett to play the most recognizable of his six Bob Dylans. "She gets right inside it, almost like any other role. It's not a stunt when she does it. It's somehow suddenly a person." **From Corsets to Skinny Jeans** The Australian actress started shooting *I'm Not There* directly after *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. "Toward the end of *Elizabeth*, I was obsessing about Bob Dylan," she says, "and watching all of his press conferences." **Up Next** She sports dark bangs as slinky Russian villainess Agent Spalko in May's *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, then stands by a backward-aging Brad Pitt in November's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. —*Adam B. Vary*

SAOIRSE RONAN

Atonement

Age 13 **Role** Aspiring writer Briony Tallis. **Oscar History** First nomination. **Family Ties** Like Vanessa Redgrave, who plays the older version of Briony, Ronan has an actor father—Paul Ronan, an Irish stage vet who also appeared in *Veronica Guerin* and *The Devil's Own*. Since the family lives most of the year in the Irish countryside, Ronan auditioned via videotape with her dad playing Keira Knightley's part. **Native Tongue** The actress (whose first name is pronounced SEER-shah) had to switch from her natural Irish brogue to genteel upper-class British. **Childproofing** Despite tackling strongly adult, R-rated material, Ronan didn't get a PG-13 version of the script. "It's one of those things where the less fuss, the better," says producer Tim Bevan. "She's a mature child." **Up Next** Ronan has the lead role in Peter Jackson's adaptation of the 2002 Alice Sebold best-seller *The Lovely Bones*. —*Jennifer Armstrong*

AMY RYAN

Gone Baby Gone

Age 38 **Role** Helene McCready, a drugged-out Boston mother whose daughter goes missing. **Oscar History** First nomination. **Potty Mouth** The New York City native had no problem speaking Helene's coarse language on set, but when she had to rerecord dialogue after shooting wrapped, she felt bashful. "I tried to look ladylike for the sound guys. I showed up in a blue sweater with ribbons," she laughs. "The line I had to do was: 'I don't know where his mother went, but she left her cats in there and I swear to God it smells like c--k.' I was like, 'Oh, God!' I turned around to the sound guys and they said, 'It sounds like a family film!'" **Up Next** Ryan is appearing in the fifth and final season of HBO's *The Wire* and Clint Eastwood's upcoming drama *The Changeling* opposite Angelina Jolie. —*Missy Schwartz*

RUBY DEE

American Gangster

Age 83 **Role** Mama of Harlem drug lord Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington). **Oscar History** Despite Dee's five-decade career acting in such classics as *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Do the Right Thing*, this is her first nomination. **Gangsta Momma** Lucas was a stone-cold killer only a mother could love—and though Dee's turn as Mama Lucas could have gotten lost amid the high-testosterone theatrics of costars Denzel Washington and Russell Crowe, the diminutive actress packed her own emotional wallop. Her tender yet fiery performance, says director Ridley Scott, helped humanize Lucas: "The reality is, Frank was good with his mother—and Ruby was so great. I mean, *wow*." **Talking Turkey** Dee, who grew up in Harlem, brought to the *Gangster* set her own memories of lining up at Thanksgiving to receive free turkeys from the local gangsters. **Up Next** The indie *Steam* with Ally Sheedy, which is not yet scheduled for release. —*Josh Rottenberg*

TILDA SWINTON

Michael Clayton

Age 47 **Role** Corporate lawyer Karen Crowder. **Oscar History** First nomination. **Getting Into Character** "I thought of Karen as a bad actress poorly cast," says the London-born actress. **Secret Identity** The art-house siren with that trademark shock of carrot-colored hair has long been a fixture in the independent-film world, starring as a gender-switching nobleman in 1993's *Orlando* and making a Golden Globe-nominated turn in the 2001 drama *The Deep End*. She made her big mainstream debut playing the White Witch in 2006's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and says she now likes to think of herself as a "studio spy." **Hollywood Ambition** To make meaty noir films like her favorite, 1945's *Mildred Pierce*. **Up Next** She matches wits with *Clayton* costar George Clooney again, playing an angry nag in the Coen brothers' upcoming *Burn After Reading*. —*Karen Valby*

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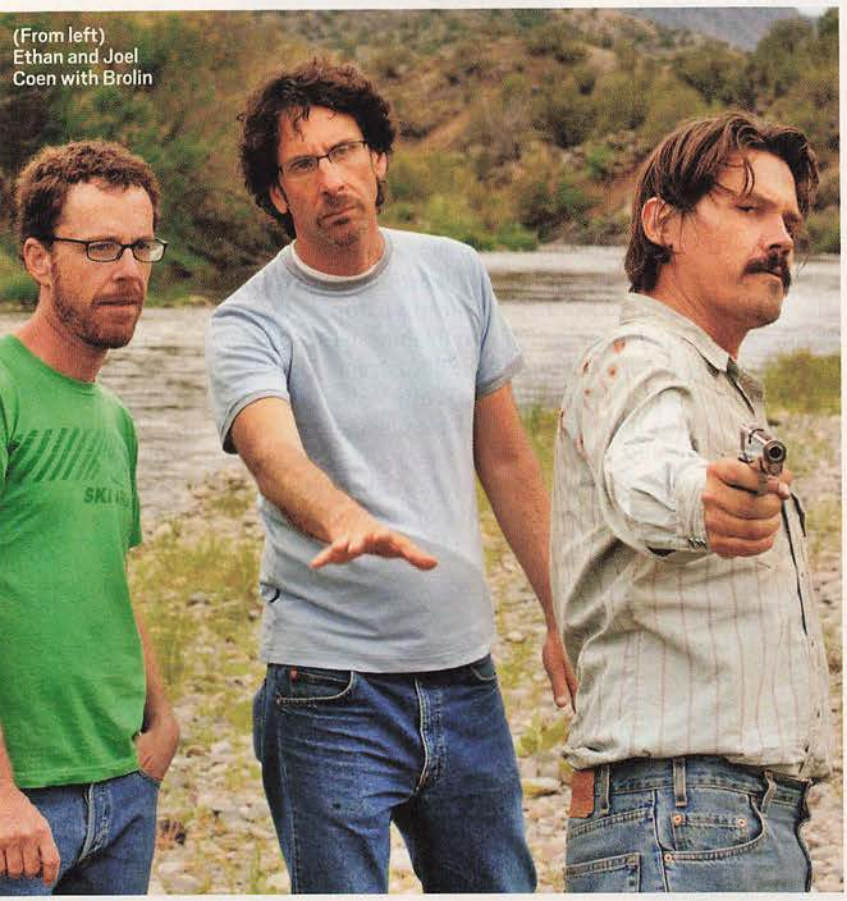
Best Director



(From left) Ethan and Joel Coen with Brolin

JOEL AND ETHAN COEN

No Country for Old Men

Ages 53, 50 **Oscar History** The brothers won Best Original Screenplay for 1996's *Fargo*, and received nominations for editing *Fargo* and for writing the adapted screenplay of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Joel also snagged a directing nod for *Fargo*. **Deadpan Handling** The Coens, Minnesota-bred sons of an economist dad and an art-historian mom, are characteristically understated in giving direction behind the camera. "After a scene, they were never, '*Wow*, man, that was great,'" recalls *No Country* star Josh Brolin. "Every time I'd look at Ethan or Joel—but especially Ethan—and go, 'How was that?' he'd kind of shrug and go, 'Ehhh.' It took me a while to figure out that that meant 'That was fantastic; we got what we wanted, but we can do another one if you want.'" **Up Next** They wrote and directed *Burn After Reading*, a CIA-themed black comedy starring George Clooney and Brad Pitt, due later this year. —*Gregory Kirschling*

JULIAN SCHNABEL

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly

Age 56 **Oscar History** First nomination. **Death Becomes Him** For seven years, Schnabel had planned to make a film adaptation of Patrick Suskind's novel *Perfume* (which German director Tom Tykwer eventually made in 2006). But then the painter/director submerged himself in this true story of a French magazine editor who becomes a quadriplegic with locked-in syndrome. "When my father died, I needed to figure out how to deal with his death," Schnabel explains. "So I found peace in this film." **Found in Translation** He admits it was a risk to direct the movie in French, a language he barely spoke. "I believe necessity is the mother of invention," he says, "and I had to do it in order to make the movie the right way." **Up Next** He shot Lou Reed's 2006 performance of his 1973 album, *Berlin*, for a feature-length concert movie that's seeking U.S. distribution. —*Christine Spines*

Schnabel with Olatz Lopez Garmendia

Reitman

JASON REITMAN

Juno

Age 30 **Oscar History** First nomination. **Scion of the Times** He's the son of director-producer Ivan Reitman, whose '80s hits include *Stripes* and *Ghostbusters*. "It's given me an odd perspective," the younger Reitman says of his upbringing. "Once or twice in a career you make something that just works, and it connects. I didn't know I was having that movie, but I'm beginning to realize that I am." **Emoticon-ese** Diablo Cody's script "almost reflects a new syntax and vocabulary that has come from the Internet," he says. "If you read the blogs, people talk this way, using common expressions, things we'd hear in TV commercials, and blending them into a dialogue." **Up Next** He's producing director Karyn Kusama's horror film *Jennifer's Body*. —*Sean Smith*

Gilroy (right) with Clooney

TONY GILROY

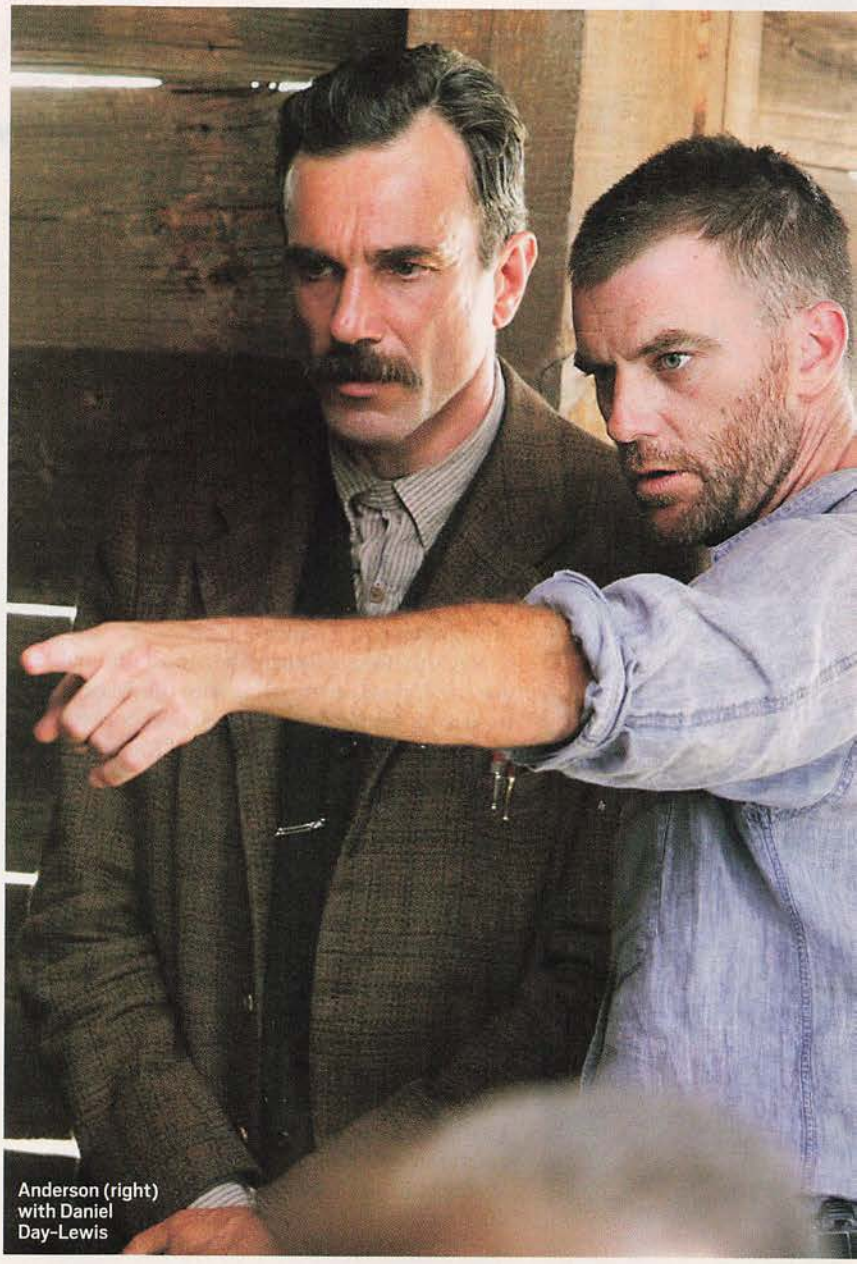
Michael Clayton

Age 51 **Oscar History** First nomination. **Learning Curve** Before making his directing debut with *Clayton*, Gilroy co-wrote the *Bourne* movies and worked "shoulder-to-shoulder" with Taylor Hackford on three films in an informal apprenticeship. "He couldn't have been more inclusive," Gilroy says. "I was involved in *everything*." **Who Needs Netflix?** *Clayton* is heavily influenced by the 1970s-era movies that both Gilroy and star George Clooney love. For inspiration, "we watched *Klute* a lot," says Gilroy. "And we screened two films we couldn't get on DVD, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* and *Prince of the City*." **Up Next** In March, Gilroy is set to direct Julia Roberts and Clive Owen in the corporate thriller *Duplicity*, which he also wrote. —*GK*

PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON

There Will Be Blood

Age 37 **Oscar History** First directing nomination, though he copped Best Original Screenplay nods for 1997's *Boogie Nights* and 1999's Altman-esque saga *Magnolia*. **Speaking of Altman...** Prior to filming *Blood*, Anderson served as backup director on the ailing auteur's final movie, *A Prairie Home Companion*. (Altman died after its release in 2006.) **Writing Exercise** After 2002's *Punch-Drunk Love*, Anderson was struggling with another script when he picked up Upton Sinclair's novel *Oil!* and began writing scenes based on the first few chapters. "I didn't think I would end up adapting the book, but it just turned out that way," he says. **Lone Stars** Though set in Southern California, *Blood* was shot in Texas. "I wanted to make an adventure film out in the desert," he says. "We built ourselves an 80-foot oil derrick, and every moment you were on it, you were in peril of something—or someone—falling." **Up Next** Nothing confirmed. —*Jeff Jensen*



Anderson (right) with Daniel Day-Lewis

(1-49) YOUNG AND RESTLESS: RICHARD FOREMAN; SCHNABEL AND LOPEZ: DARMENDRA; ETIENNE GEORGE; (THIS PAGE) REITMAN: DUANE GREGORY; CLOONEY AND GILROY: MYLES ARONOWITZ; DAY-LEWIS AND ANDERSON: MELINDA SUE GORDON

Golden Opportun

Fifty years after his first Oscar nomination, director SIDNEY LUMET lets loose about a half century of Academy contenders

by Chris Nashawaty

Sidney Lumet knew he wasn't going to be nominated for an Oscar this year. After 50 years behind the camera, you get a sense of how these things shake out. "Getting nominated is like catching lightning in a bottle," says the 83-year-old director. "Trust me, I've been through this enough to know by now."

Nevertheless, at an age when most filmmakers are either dead or wrestling with the artists they used to be, Lumet proved in last fall's corkscrewing heist drama, *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*, that he's still working at the peak of his powers. In fact, people have been coming up to him lately and asking how he does it. When they do, he just shrugs. "I know people are amazed because we're so obsessed with youth, but honestly, I don't know why anyone's surprised."

Nomination or no nomination, it's hard not to think of Lumet on the eve of this year's awards. It was 50 years ago that he earned his first Best Director nod for his debut feature, 1957's *12 Angry Men*. And it was 25 years ago that he received his fourth directing nomination for 1982's *The Verdict*. That's a nice pair of bookends—even if those bookends aren't gold statuettes. Aside from an Honorary Oscar in 2005, Lumet has never won one. He's the first to admit that he probably didn't deserve to win on a couple of those occasions. But he also

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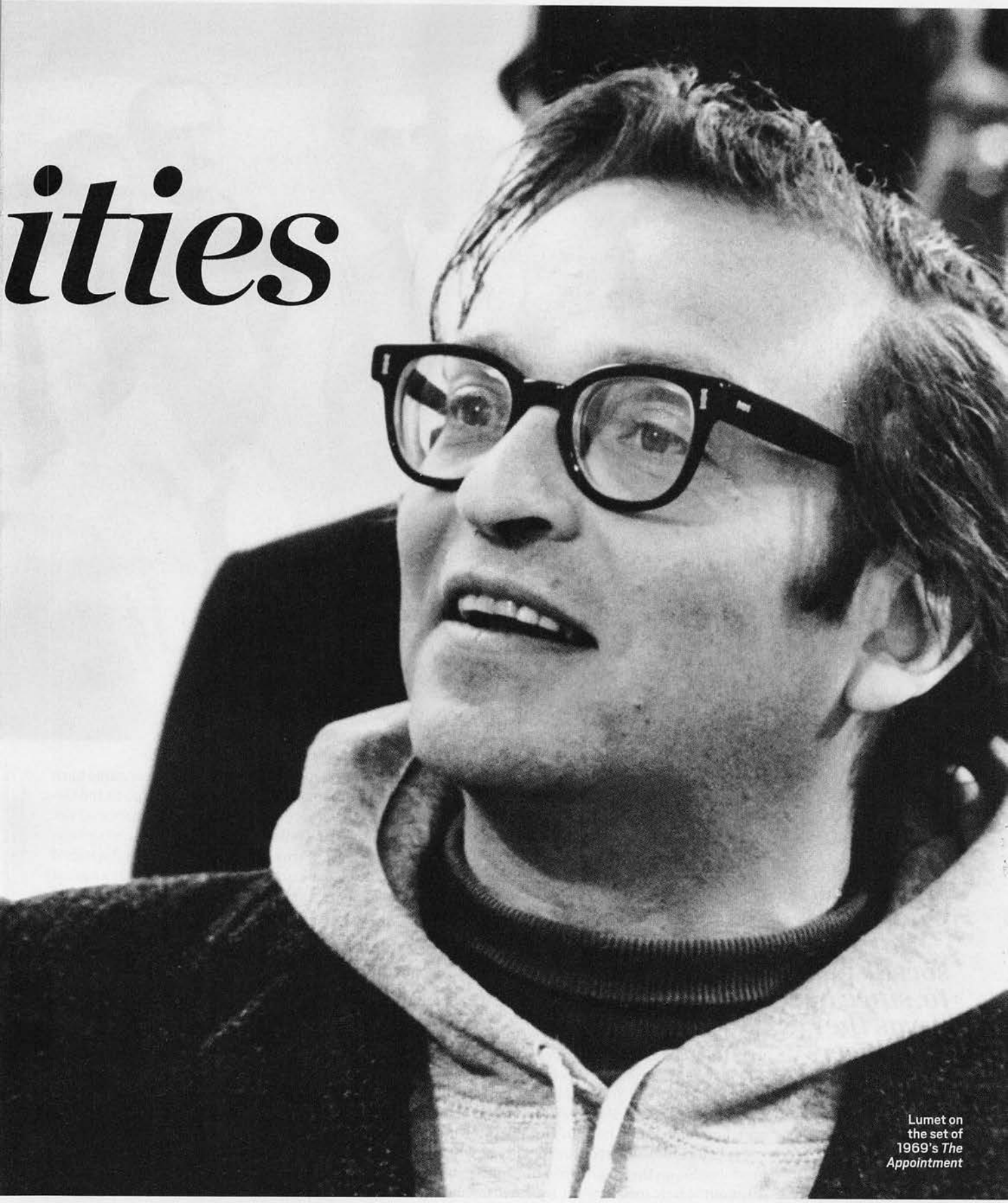

Lumet on the set of 1969's *The Appointment*

Fonda, fifth from left, in Lumet's *12 Angry Men*

Fonda didn't like to watch himself in dailies. But he sort of had to, since he was the producer.

believes that he was robbed a couple of times, too. In any case, Lumet is proudest of the 18 nominations he's snagged for his actors and actresses—folks like Al Pacino, Ingrid Bergman, and Paul Newman, whom he refers to as his "infantry."

With these gold and silver anniversaries in mind, we sat down with the ageless auteur to discuss the tricky art of catching lightning in a bottle and his string of unconsummated dates with that cruel little tease, Oscar.

12 Angry Men (1957)

Lumet was a director at CBS, helming episodes of TV shows such as Danger *and* You Are There, *when he was tapped to make his feature debut on Henry Fonda's jury-room drama. It received three nominations: Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Picture, and Best Director.* "Henry Fonda was critical to my career. I remember that he didn't like to watch himself in dailies. But he sort of *had* to, since he was the producer. So, on the first day of dailies, after about 20 minutes, he leaned forward, squeezed my shoulder, and said, 'It's brilliant,' and never came back again.... I'm ashamed to say I didn't go to the Oscars that year. Talk about the arrogance of the young! I had fallen in love with a new girl and she couldn't go. So we stayed in New York and watched it on TV at a party. Now I prefer to go. It's a great rat f---. I've never thought I was going to win and so far I haven't! And yet, when you get into the limo, on the ride over you've somehow convinced yourself that you have a chance. Even very sensible people get deeply hurt when they don't win."

The Pawnbroker (1965)

Lumet's brutal drama about a Holocaust survivor–turned–Harlem shop owner earned Rod Steiger a Best Actor nod. It's a powerhouse performance that Lumet admits easily could have been undermined by his leading man's tendency to overact. "Yes, he could overdo it. With Rod, you just had to tamp him down. It's an easier problem than trying to get someone to act *more*. He knew that he could overdo it, but he put aside his ego. After we

(PP. 42–43) *12 ANGRY MEN*: UNITED ARTISTS/KOBAL COLLECTION; *THE PAWNBROKER*: NETWORK; EVERETT; SEIPPO; PARAMOUNT PICTURES/PHOTOFEST; *MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS*: UNITED ARTISTS/KOBAL COLLECTION; *DOG DAY AFTERNOON*: WARNER BROS./PHOTOFEST; *PRINCE OF THE CITY*: ORION/SCREENSCENES; *THE VERDICT*: 20TH CENTURY FOX/MPTV; *LUMET*: PHOTOFEST

finished shooting, though, we were talking and I couldn't believe it, he spoke for 15 minutes about how *he* made *On the Waterfront* with the famous scene in the back of the car! Marlon Brando didn't exist for him! The 'I coulda been a contender' line didn't exist for him! All he saw was himself in the back of that car!"

Serpico (1973)

A gritty thriller about police corruption in New York City, Serpico *marked the first collaboration between Lumet and one of his favorite leading men, Al Pacino, who received a nomination for Best Actor.* "I replaced John Avildsen four or five weeks before it was supposed to start shooting. We had to get going right away because Al was lined up to do *The Godfather Part II* afterwards. When he heard I wanted to do two weeks of rehearsals, he got excited, because he's a theater guy. With Pacino, the talent is so extraordinary. But it breaks my heart. He's one of those actors—Philip Seymour Hoffman is like this too—who, if the scene is about anger, he has to stay angry all day. I mean, off camera, over lunch, everything. You pay a price for that. But that's what all of those actors in Al's generation were like—De Niro, Dustin. It's not their job to work the way I want; it's my job to work the way they want. Because they're the infantry."

Murder on the Orient Express (1974)

Based on an Agatha Christie whodunit, this old-school all-star extravaganza earned six nominations, including ones for Albert Finney and Ingrid Bergman; the latter wound up winning Best Supporting Actress. "It was the best plot I ever read. I thought it would be great if we cast big stars in all of the parts, but that would cost a lot of money. I had a good relationship with Sean Connery and he agreed to do it for $100,000 and a piece of the back end. And that became the template for everyone else. They all wound up getting paid because the film did very well. I originally wanted Ingrid Bergman for the role of Princess Dragomiroff, but when I went to see her in London, she told me she wanted to play the nurse instead. She was very film-knowledgeable. She'd worked with such masters. So when she saw that I didn't do a reverse shot of Albert Finney in their big scene together and there would be no cutaways, she gave me a kiss on the mouth. I almost left my wife! [*Laughs*] I remember being pissed off that we got so many nominations and I didn't get nominated."

Dog Day Afternoon (1975)

Lumet reteamed with Pacino for this '70s masterpiece about a pair of desperate bank robbers, one of whom is trying to finance his male lover's sex-change operation. Dog Day *received six nominations, including Best Director and Best Actor, but the night belonged to* One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. "Everyone talks about the movies of the '70s now like it was this golden age. We had no idea at the time. Al was terribly nervous about doing *Dog Day Afternoon.* I don't think any major American star had played not only a gay guy but a gay guy who's in love with a man getting an operation to be a woman! The night before we started rehearsals his hands were shaking. He was ready to quit. I was nervous that this thing would be showing in Brooklyn on a Saturday night and some guy would shout "Fag!" at the screen. The only way to prevent that was to be so true to these characters that everybody couldn't help but get swept up in the movie. I think it's Al's best performance. We lost to *Cuckoo's Nest.* Damn good film. You can't feel too bad about losing to that."

Network (1976)

The Paddy Chayefsky-scripted film, which earned 10 Oscar nominations, now seems like an amazingly dead-on dissection of where television was headed. But it wasn't always so. "People called *Network* a satire. And we would say, 'No, it's not a satire, it's sheer reportage.' Well, we haven't killed anybody on the air yet. Yet! I thought it was important to get someone as close to Walter Cronkite as you could get to play Howard Beale. We thought about Gregory Peck. Then Peter Finch said he had gotten a copy of the script and wanted to do it.

Ethan Hawke in *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*; below, Newman in *The Verdict*

(1-4) © ANDY BEAN PHOTOGRAPHY; (THIS PAGE) BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD: WILL HART; THE VERDICT: © 20TH CENTURY FOX/FOTO FANTASIES

Michael Jackson in *The Wiz*

> ***'The Wiz' was a disaster. I had this idea that a great fantasy could be made out of New York—that I could make Oz out of reality.***

Paddy was delighted, but the foreignness of him bothered me. [Finch, who died two months before the 1977 Oscar ceremony, was a Brit.] Then Peter asked if I would send him a copy of *The New York Times* and he would read it into a tape recorder and send me the tape. It was perfect. There was no trace of an accent. It's embarrassing that *Rocky* beat us out. Chayefsky was so prescient. Everyone was saying we were going to take it all. And on the flight out to L.A., he said, '*Rocky*'s going to take Best Picture.' And I said, 'No, no, it's a dopey little movie.' And he said, 'It's just the sort of sentimental crap they love out there.' And he was right."

The Wiz (1978)

Lumet's adaptation of the hit Broadway musical remains one of the strangest films on his résumé. Starring Diana Ross and Michael Jackson, The Wiz *was both a critical and commercial bomb. Nevertheless, it was nominated for four Oscars.* "It was a disaster. I had this idea that a great fantasy could be made out of New York—that I could make Oz out of reality. We could have the lion statue in front of the New York Public Library come to life and turn into the Cowardly Lion and things like that. But that didn't happen because I didn't know enough technically. Generally I'm pretty good about failure. I don't go hog wild when things are going marvelously and I don't go into despair when they're not. That's why I haven't read a review of one of my films since *The Sea Gull* in 1968. All the reviews were bad and I thought I had done some of my best work on that movie. So I just figured, What's the point?"

Prince of the City (1981)

Like Serpico, Prince of the City *is a sprawling morality play about NYPD corruption. Unlike* Serpico, *audiences didn't show up. Still, Lumet and Jay Presson Allen earned an Adapted Screenplay nomination.* "I don't consider myself a writer, but there are certain worlds I know. Cops, corruption, courtrooms. When you're in a courtroom, you've already got your antagonist and your protagonist. You don't even need any exposition. Also, especially in criminal trials, the stakes are so high! I knew I wouldn't win that year. I knew an audience would walk in with a preconceived notion of what the movie was going to be and the complexity of it would come as a shock—maybe that terrible cop isn't so terrible after all! It wasn't a conventional enough script to win. It's like the difference between *Network* and *Rocky*. *Rocky* is handed to you like a roast pig at a Christmas dinner. *Network*, and this, you have to work a little."

The Verdict (1982)

Lumet had known Paul Newman from back in their TV days in the '50s, but the two had never worked together until this gut-wrenching courtroom drama about an alcoholic Boston ambulance chaser. The film earned five nominations, including Best Actor, Best Director, and Best Picture. But it was Gandhi*'s night.* "I took three weeks of rehearsal because I thought the characters were complex and Newman had told me that he was beginning to have some trouble remembering his lines. At the end of the second week, we were driving home together and he said, 'I feel like there's something you're not telling me.' And I told him that I thought he was butting against a wall with the part, that there was something about this guy he didn't want us to see. I subsequently found out that he had had a drinking problem as a young man and it was the booze that gave him trouble with the character. But Newman, to his credit, eventually said, 'F--- it, I'll let it all show.' The scene where he can't pick up the shot glass because his hands are shaking, so he leans forward and sips the top of it—that's a strong scene. I thought we might win that year. But I knew that *Gandhi* was the perfect Oscar movie—the big epic with the noble hero. [*Lumet yawns dramatically.*] It's the kind of picture I would never go see because I already know it frame by frame before I even step inside the theater. That's not the kind of film that interests me." ■

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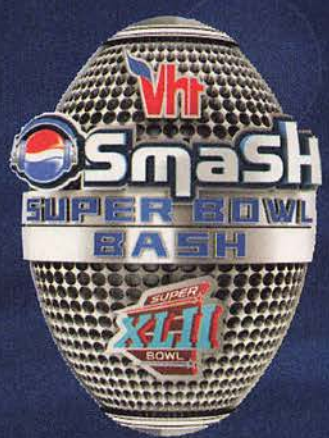

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Ballot

PICTURE
- Atonement
- Juno
- Michael Clayton
- No Country for Old Men
- There Will Be Blood

Depp

ACTOR
- George Clooney Michael Clayton
- Daniel Day-Lewis There Will Be Blood
- Johnny Depp Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
- Tommy Lee Jones In the Valley of Elah
- Viggo Mortensen Eastern Promises

ACTRESS
- Cate Blanchett Elizabeth: The Golden Age
- Julie Christie Away From Her
- Marion Cotillard La Vie en Rose
- Laura Linney The Savages
- Ellen Page Juno

SUPPORTING ACTOR
- Casey Affleck The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford
- Javier Bardem No Country for Old Men
- Philip Seymour Hoffman Charlie Wilson's War
- Hal Holbrook Into the Wild
- Tom Wilkinson Michael Clayton

SUPPORTING ACTRESS
- Cate Blanchett I'm Not There
- Ruby Dee American Gangster
- Saoirse Ronan Atonement
- Amy Ryan Gone Baby Gone
- Tilda Swinton Michael Clayton

DIRECTOR
- Paul Thomas Anderson There Will Be Blood
- Ethan Coen and Joel Coen No Country for Old Men
- Tony Gilroy Michael Clayton
- Jason Reitman Juno
- Julian Schnabel The Diving Bell and the Butterfly

Operation Homecoming

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE
- No End in Sight
- Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience
- Sicko
- Taxi to the Dark Side
- War/Dance

DOCUMENTARY SHORT
- Freeheld
- La Corona (The Crown)
- Salim Baba
- Sari's Mother

ANIMATED FEATURE
- Persepolis
- Ratatouille
- Surf's Up

Beaufort

FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM
- Beaufort (Israel)
- The Counterfeiters (Austria)
- Katyń (Poland)
- Mongol (Kazakhstan)
- 12 (Russia)

CINEMATOGRAPHY
- The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford
- Atonement
- The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
- No Country for Old Men
- There Will Be Blood

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY
- Brad Bird; story by Bird, Jim Capobianco, and Jan Pinkava Ratatouille
- Diablo Cody Juno
- Tony Gilroy Michael Clayton
- Tamara Jenkins The Savages
- Nancy Oliver Lars and the Real Girl

ADAPTED SCREENPLAY
- Paul Thomas Anderson There Will Be Blood
- Ethan Coen and Joel Coen No Country for Old Men
- Christopher Hampton Atonement
- Ronald Harwood The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
- Sarah Polley Away From Her

ART DIRECTION
- American Gangster
- Atonement
- The Golden Compass
- Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street
- There Will Be Blood

ANIMATED SHORT FILM
- I Met the Walrus
- Madame Tutli-Putli
- Même les Pigeons Vont au Paradis (Even Pigeons Go to Heaven)
- My Love (Moya Lyubov)
- Peter & the Wolf

LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM
- At Night
- Il Supplente (The Substitute)
- Le Mozart des Pickpockets (The Mozart of Pickpockets)
- Tanghi Argentini
- The Tonto Woman

Transformers

VISUAL EFFECTS
- The Golden Compass
- Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End
- Transformers

COSTUME DESIGN
- Across the Universe
- Atonement
- Elizabeth: The Golden Age
- La Vie en Rose
- Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

FILM EDITING
- The Bourne Ultimatum
- The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
- Into the Wild
- No Country for Old Men
- There Will Be Blood

SOUND MIXING
- The Bourne Ultimatum
- No Country for Old Men
- Ratatouille
- 3:10 to Yuma
- Transformers

Ratatouille

SOUND EDITING
- The Bourne Ultimatum
- No Country for Old Men
- Ratatouille
- There Will Be Blood
- Transformers

ORIGINAL SCORE
- Atonement
- The Kite Runner
- Michael Clayton
- Ratatouille
- 3:10 to Yuma

ORIGINAL SONG
- "Falling Slowly" Once
- "Happy Working Song" Enchanted
- "Raise It Up" August Rush
- "So Close" Enchanted
- "That's How You Know" Enchanted

MAKEUP
- La Vie en Rose
- Norbit
- Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

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THE MUST LIST

Ten Things We Love This Week

1. RENT on Broadway

Sadly, the "Seasons of Love" are passing: After 12 years, 5,012 performances, and more than 525,000 moments so dear, the Great White Way's beloved bohemian tale closes on June 1.

2. THE KINGDOM, SERIES 2 on DVD

Somehow, the second half of Danish director Lars von Trier's deranged mash-up of *ER* and *Twin Peaks* is even sudsier and more bizarre than the first.

3. HELPING ME HELP MYSELF, by Beth Lisick

The author's year of self-improvement leads her to "Cruise to Lose" with Richard Simmons. That *can't* end well.

4. THE LATE LATE SHOW WITH CRAIG FERGUSON on CBS

Only the Great Scot could keep us up so late on a school night with some of the wee hours' most disarming and freewheeling chats.

5. MAKE ME A SUPERMODEL

Tyra's catwalk juggernaut finally has a formidable foe, as Bravo's Niki Taylor and Tyson Beckford take on the *ANTM* empire with a little class. And pecs.

6. JUKEBOX, Cat Power

Chan Marshall covers Chan Marshall! Oh yeah, and she also tackles Bob Dylan, Hank Williams, and others on her soulful new album.

7. BLAIR UNDERWOOD in 'In Treatment'

His cocksure Navy pilot on HBO's therapy series is just a prelude to his return in CBS' *The New Adventures of Old Christine* on Feb. 4.

8. GO WITH ME, by Castle Freeman Jr.

Think Jodie Foster in *The Brave One*, with some backup: A terrorized woman in rural Vermont enlists the help of two men to track down her stalker.

9. TEETH

Dawn (Jess Weixler), the virginal heroine of this black comedy, has incisors in her lady parts. But in her defense, she's got an amazing personality.

READER'S CHOICE

SEND YOUR PICKS TO **EW.COM**

10. FAMILY GUY: BLUE HARVEST on DVD

Peter channels Han Solo in the Fox series' *Star Wars* send-up. Can the Millennium Falcon take such abuse?

Submitted by Daniel Fidler

PHOTOS: SONY BMG/RED; ANNE MEE N SUPERMODEL: BARBARA NITKE; CAT POWER: GUZMAN/CORBIS OUTLINE; IN TREATMENT: CLAUDETTE BARIUS; FAMILY GUY: FOX

THE REVIEWS

(From left) *There Will Be Blood*'s Day-Lewis, *Atonement*'s Knightley, *Juno*'s Page, and *No Country*'s Bardem

MOVIES

End Game

And they lived happily ever after. Or miserably. Or not at all. A look at grand, and not so grand, finales.

BY LISA SCHWARZBAUM

The end is near. Not yet, but soon. Because whether granted a life span of 90 minutes, two hours, or even four, all movies are guaranteed to terminate before our eyes. And all we can do is watch, and hope. The question is, What do we wish for these days before the credits roll? To be uplifted or to be luxuriously bummed out? To be scoured by bitterness or cleansed by sadness? To be tied up and cradled with a bow or to be left hanging? To have our expectations fulfilled or to be well and truly punk'd?

We had a taste of all this past year, but before I go any further, here's a warning, or *alert*, if you'd rather: What follows is an analysis of several endings from famous movies from 2007. As such I will inevitably mention what happens in those movies, specifically *Juno*, *Atonement*, *No Country for Old Men*, and *There Will Be Blood*. So let the spoiler-sensitive reader beware.

ILLUSTRATION BY GLUEKIT

Still with me? I've been thinking a lot about the end lately, especially after the announcement of this year's Best Picture Oscar nominees: The list clarified my sense that almost all the most important films of this past year had dang-all to do with classic conclusions, clean finishes, and the whole Happily Ever After machinery of storytelling. Instead, the movies that mattered prided themselves on tossing whole formulas (old as Greek drama, durable as a Disney flick) on their heads. When we weren't rushing headlong to embrace movies that ended in death, sadness, and ambiguity, we took our happy endings with a grain of salt. Consider: 2007 was a year in which we cheered a beautiful princess for ditching a handsome prince—charmingly dim as he was—and trusting her heart to a dishy divorce lawyer in the delightfully droll modern fairy tale *Enchanted*. And that notion was cooked up not by a rat but by chefs in the Disney kitchen.

Enchanted is a merry joke, with the kind of ingratiating, meta-happy-ending that sneaks in a new definition of the "right" romantic conclusion while winking at what we've been fed for generations. In contrast, what's most newsworthy in *Juno*—a fairy tale for our time, despite all the serious conversation it has generated about teen pregnancy—is that neither boy nor girl is prince or princess, hero or heroine. Juno herself (Ellen Page) has no use for royalty, or even high school popularity. She's a kooky dork of a student, accidentally pregnant after unprotected sex with Bleeker (Michael Cera), her kooky dork of a best guy friend; she opts for birth and giving her baby up for adoption; she follows through, safely and successfully; and as flowers bloom, she and Bleeker—now upgraded to the status of official boyfriend—strum his-and-hers guitars and sing a po-mo love duet.

Juno gets away with this *awww, geee* finish and makes us feel that everything old is new again because—well, because this is the story of a dorky pregnant teen who gives her baby up for adoption. It's a current-events safe-sex lecture of the cutest sort. Besides, in 2007, dorks were the new heartthrobs, from *Knocked Up* and *Superbad* to *Hairspray* and *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*. Had Juno—or Bleeker—been a bona fide hottie, their story would only have worked on TV; it's made for *Gossip Girl*.

Clearly, the Beautiful People have it tougher in today's movies. Look at the eye-candy couple in *Atonement*, Cecilia (Keira Knightley) and Robbie (James McAvoy). They're smashing in their eveningwear, but, of course, their love is doomed—damaged by a malicious accusation by Cee's kid sister, Briony (Saoirse Ronan), that lands Robbie in prison, and then in the army at war. The kid (a born fabulist in part because she's a born writer) spends the rest of her life atoning for the damage she caused. Adult Briony (Romola Garai) picks up the thread, waxing on about how the love between Cecilia and Robbie remained strong, even during war's privations. But it takes the arrival of old Briony (Vanessa Redgrave) to tell the truth of what happened to the beautiful older sister and her lover, rather than the fiction. And the facts aren't romantic; they're numbingly tragic.

Or at least they could have been if the filmmakers had just left the book alone, left it to be modern. Instead, director Joe Wright and his team mess with the narrative structure of Ian McEwan's best-seller. Not trusting us to apprehend Briony's lies and truths, he fades out with the kind of mush even *Enchanted* would find icky—images of the happy couple frolicking by their cottage with bluebirds tweeting over the White Cliffs of Dover.

Page finds her calling as *Juno*'s kooky dork

Backstory

+ Sometimes "The End" is just a starting point for producers eager to please moviegoers. In one famous example, test audiences reportedly demanded—and were given—a more gruesome fate for Glenn Close's manipulative character in *Fatal Attraction* (above).

CRITICAL MASS

A sampling of critics from across the country grade 10 current releases.

	TY BURR *Boston Globe*	LISA KENNEDY *The Denver Post*	LIAM LACEY *Toronto Globe and Mail*	MICK LASALLE *San Francisco Chronicle*	JACK MATHEWS *N.Y. Daily News*	TODD McCARTHY *Variety*	CLAUDIA PUIG *USA Today*	CARRIE RICKEY *The Philadelphia Inquirer*	RENE RODRIGUEZ *The Miami Herald*	STEPHANIE ZACHAREK *Salon.com*	ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY	EW READERS*	CRITICS' AVERAGE
THE BUCKET LIST	–	B–	C–	C+	B–	D	D	C	D–	D	C	B	C
CASSANDRA'S DREAM	B–	C	C+	B	B–	C	C–	C	–	C–	B	C+	C+
CLOVERFIELD	B+	B	–	–	B+	C+	B	C+	–	D	B+	B+	B–
FIRST SUNDAY	–	C+	D	–	–	–	C	–	–	C–	C	C	C–
THE GREAT DEBATERS	B+	A–	C+	B	B	B–	B	A–	B–	–	B	B+	B
▲ MAD MONEY	–	B–	–	C+	–	–	C	C+	–	D	B–	C+	C+
PERSEPOLIS	A–	A	B+	B	A–	B–	A	A–	–	A	A	A–	A–
SWEENEY TODD...	B	A–	A–	–	A–	B+	B+	C+	A–	C–	B+	B+	B+
THERE WILL BE BLOOD	A–	A	A–	C+	A–	A	A–	A–	A	C	A	B+	A–
27 DRESSES	C	–	C	C–	–	–	C+	C+	–	C–	C+	B	C

*EW READER GRADES come from the Front Row, EW's online reader panel. If you'd like to join, go to frontrowpanel.com/join.

(THIS PAGE) JUNO: DOANE GREGORY; FATAL ATTRACTION: PARAMOUNT PICTURES/EVERETT COLLECTION; MAD MONEY: MELISSA MOSELEY

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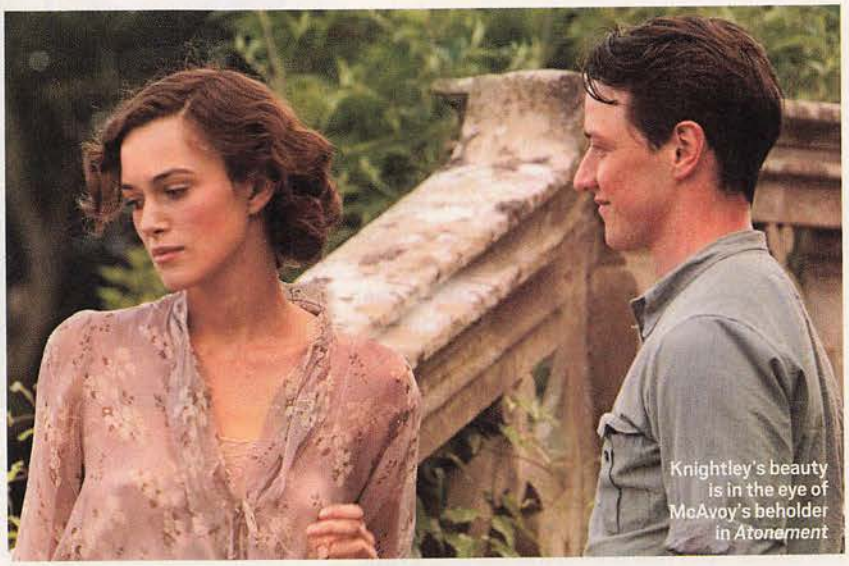


Knightley's beauty is in the eye of McAvoy's beholder in *Atonement*

And then, like Tommy Lee Jones says at the end of *No Country for Old Men*, I woke up. His Sheriff Ed Tom Bell has retired, and he's recounting a dream to his wife. Llewelyn (Josh Brolin) and Carla Jean Moss (Kelly MacDonald) are dead. Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), wounded, has vanished, almost into thin air. But where's the money Chigurh was tracking with such single-mindedness? Do good (the sheriff) and evil (Chigurh) come to a standstill? What was accomplished by all those flying bullets? I tell you what: Those not quite sure of the answers can count the ambiguity as its own reward. While *Atonement* manages to muffle a dramatic, switcheroo ending, *No Country* makes the most of contemporary, anxiety-provoking cosmic uncertainty, leaving no one happy and everyone talking—in fitting faithfulness to the stark novel by Cormac McCarthy on which it's based. Besides, such ornery jiggering is right up the attitudinal alley of writer-directors Joel and Ethan Coen, who never met an audience they didn't want to bait—and I mean that in a good way. *No Country* was made for those of us who live in times where we don't know squat but like to think we do. So here's a violent, bloodstained parable about men chasing one another, long after the devil knows they're dead. It ends in a finale of chilling, suspended quiet. No wonder movie lovers are debating loudly—was Chigurh even real, or was he a ghost? You make the call, Friend-o.

"While *Atonement* muffles a switcheroo ending, *No Country* makes the most of cosmic uncertainty, leaving no one happy and everyone talking."

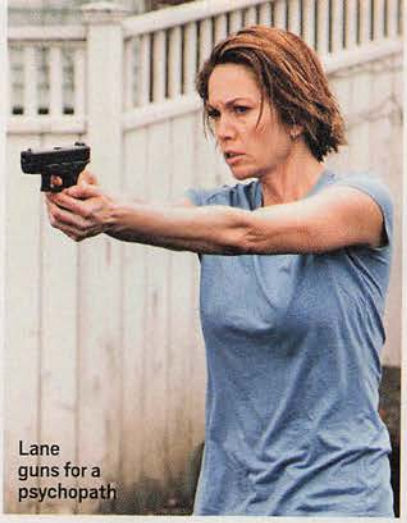
But before you do, spare a moment's awe for the bitterest, blackest cinder of an ending in all of 2007—the abandon-all-hope conclusion of *There Will Be Blood*. For over two and a half hours, we've watched Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis) corrode from a resourceful entrepreneur to a twisted competitor with hate pumping in his veins. We've watched his ingenuity rot into sadism. We've watched how the devil took capitalism and the devil took religion. And in the lonely bowling alley in Plainview's mansion, where the grizzled, drink-sodden wreck has shut himself off from all other humans to chew on meat like a dog, we watch as he enacts one final, violent battle with Eli Sunday (Paul Dano), the preacher who has goaded and tormented him so long.

There are pipelines to progress and prosperity leading all the way to the Pacific Ocean now, but, says preacher-filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson, at a price—the price of sanity. Of salvation. The ending of *There Will Be Blood* is as old as the Bible and as new as today—a finale that resonates into the future. And now, to quote the oilman, I'm finished. ■

Net Loss

Diane Lane can't fix a floppy computer thriller.

BY CLARK COLLIS



Lane guns for a psychopath

Untraceable
Diane Lane, Billy Burke
R, 101 mins. (Screen Gems)

Is *Unfaithful* and *Under the Tuscan Sun* star Diane Lane just randomly picking movies that start with the letters *U* and *N*? On this evidence, quite possibly. She plays a widowed, cybercrime-investigating FBI agent on the trail of a creep who kills people in various grisly ways and broadcasts it live over the Internet. The twist? The more people who log on to the sicko's website, the quicker the victim bleeds out/fries to death/becomes the piquant seasoning in a sulfuric acid soup. That's right—the real perp is you (or possibly YouTube). Then the homicidal maniac hacks his way into Lane's computer and her own life is put at risk, as are the lives of her predictably cute daughter and mom.

Lane skillfully sells the tech-heavy script. But after a much-too-early reveal of the murderer's identity, the "low battery" signal starts to flash on this film by thriller specialist Gregory Hoblit, director of last year's far superior *Fracture*. Moreover, it seems a bit rich to criticize the public's appetite for watching grisly images while serving up scenes of torture porn that, in terms of visceral horror, come close to rivaling the nastiest moments of the *Hostel* or *Saw* franchises. The hypocrisy is, well, *un*deniable. **B–**

How She Move

Rutina Wesley, Tre Armstrong
PG-13, 98 mins. (Paramount Vantage)

She move good! The specificity of Caribbean-Canadian life in a low-income, multiethnic Toronto neighborhood gives this pleasantly conventional story of striving and step dancing its flavor. Plus, the moves—more gymnastically hybrid than those in *Stomp the Yard*—are fierce, especially as set to a pounding soundtrack by Missy Elliott and Busta Rhymes, among others. Rutina Wesley glowers with just the right touch of sweetness as a brainy student (and stellar after-school stepper) who needs to learn how to honor her old hood even as she studies hard to move on out. **B+** —*LS*

The Air I Breathe

Sarah Michelle Gellar, Forest Whitaker
R, 97 mins. (THINKFilm)

Chance, destiny, happiness, sorrow, unintentional parody: Somewhere between the bit where Sarah Michelle Gellar weeps as a sad rock star with a rare blood type whose career is under the thumb of Andy Garcia as a mean gangster named Fingers, and the part where Forest Whitaker blubbers hysterically as an office drone who robs a bank, the air gets much too thin and polluted with pretense. And filmmaker-y posturing on the part of first-time writer-director Jieho Lee interferes with the clarity of his interwoven stories, which relate, he says, to a Chinese proverb about the four pillars of life. **D–** —*LS*

Woman on the Beach

Kim Seung-woo, Kim Tae-woo, Ko Hyun-joung
Unrated, 127 mins. (New Yorker)

In the beautiful, drily funny/sad relationship dramas of South Korean auteur Hong Sang-soo (*Tale of Cinema*), the heart never knows what it wants. Men forever fumble and screw up, women are forever disappointed by the opposite sex, and then everyone drinks too much and goes to bed with the wrong partner. Hong's latest is his best and most optimistic, a triangle tale about a filmmaker with writer's block (Kim Seung-woo), his production associate (Kim Tae-woo), and a woman (Ko Hyun-joung) teetering between them on, yes, a wintry Korean beach. **A** —*LS*

Director's Chair
CRISTIAN MUNGIU

4 Months' stark take on illegal abortion in pre-revolution Romania has won the 40-year-old Mungiu wide acclaim—and he's only just begun. *—Leah Greenblatt*

You say this film is part of a proposed trilogy. How do you see that unfolding?
It will involve younger Romanian directors as well as me, maybe six episodes and two more features. But we will see!

It's hard not to wonder how personal this movie is for you...
This is a true story that happened pretty much as you see in the film, to someone who was very close to me. I was struck by how much emotion, how much frustration came with this conversation, and I thought, if this is so characteristic of our generation, this should become a film. And after a lot of screenings, there were so many women in the audience just standing up and speaking openly about this for the first time, and we found out this was actually a very widespread story.

It's a pretty difficult movie to shake off.
This is how films should be, for me. They should stay with you, because it is useless to spend two years of your life making something people will forget five minutes after they stand up, you know?

Support system: Marinca and Vasiliu

Hard Day's Plight

In a brilliant, if bleak, drama, two friends struggle to arrange an illegal abortion in Communist Romania. **BY LISA SCHWARZBAUM**

4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days
Anamaria Marinca, Laura Vasiliu
Unrated, 113 mins. (IFC)

Nothing good happens in *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, the riveting, horrifying chronicle of an illegal abortion performed in 1987 when Ceauşescu's dictatorial hand still gripped Romania's throat. And yet no lover of greatness in filmmaking will want to look away from one of the very best movies of 2007, just now receiving its American release. Cristian Mungiu's powerful documentary-style drama—rightful winner of the top prize at Cannes last year—arrives on the heels of Cristi Puiu's 2006 international award winner, *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*. And taken together, the two establish a new, exciting, distinctly Romanian cinematic voice distinguished by a preference for documentary-style austerity and a control that only *looks* artless, applied in service to social realism and the honest commemoration of recent history. With no little irony does Mungiu bill *4 Months* as the first in his "Tales of the Golden Age."

The action takes place over the longest 24 hours in the lives of fellow college students Gabita (Laura Vasiliu) and her roommate, Otilia (Anamaria Marinca, who'd win an Oscar in my ideal universe). Gabita is the pregnant one; she's also the more childlike one, nearly paralyzed with fear. So it falls to Otilia, the more resourceful one, to arrange for a termination—raising the cash, procuring the abortionist, and booking the hotel in which the terrible business can be done. In the beginning, Mungiu documents their shared tenement life itself as a microcosm of what it takes to survive in a beaten-down society, a hive of bartering and bribing for everything from cigarettes to soap. Otilia is proficient at the deal, but she's on much more dangerous ground negotiating with a service provider who's nothing like the empathetic back-alley heroine of *Vera Drake*. She's also alone, unable to entrust even her boyfriend with her secrets: He's from a higher class of the "classless" society, and in one of the movie's most devastating scenes, Otilia sits silently at her beau's family table (a family lousy with well-to-do doctors, no less), while glib opportunists party all around her.

EW PICK

The abortionist, Mr. Bebe (Vlad Ivanov), is at once a monster, a necessity, and just another literally damned man working his own degraded and degrading angles in a no-win society. Yet by the time he finishes with his ministrations—and they are all the more terrible for taking place just out of camera sight—these two young women will be scarred in ways even they couldn't have imagined. Working with Oleg Mutu, the superb cinematographer who also shot *Mr. Lazarescu*, Mungiu has a daring sense of when to hoist a handheld camera and when to let the camera sit still while characters move in and out of the frame in long, unbroken takes—as in real life. Misery is everywhere in this spare masterpiece, but so is artistic triumph. **A**

BRAD RENFRO

The actor, who died tragically last week, got his first shot at acting when Knoxville, Tenn., police directed a Hollywood casting agent to a scrappy 10-year-old who epitomized the "lost boy" he'd later portray. A handful of Renfro's most memorable roles. —*Jeff Labrecque*

THE CLIENT (1994) Plucked from obscurity to star opposite Susan Sarandon in a John Grisham thriller, the actor held his own as a kid witness pursued by Mafia hoods.

SLEEPERS (1996) Renfro, playing a young version of Brad Pitt's character, is one of four boyhood pals who endure hellish treatment from the depraved guards at a juvenile detention center.

APT PUPIL (1998) Months after his first drug arrest for cocaine and marijuana at age 15, the actor danced with darkness on screen, playing an A student obsessed with a wily Nazi (Ian McKellen) living incognito in his town.

BULLY (2001) Tormented by the neighborhood alpha male (Nick Stahl), Renfro played the reluctant ringleader of a brutal retaliation in this scandalous depiction of actual events.

GHOST WORLD (2001) A bungled 2000 yacht theft further dimmed his star, but Renfro impressed as the bland but beautiful store clerk who fascinates Scarlett Johansson and Thora Birch's sarcastic duo.

THE JACKET (2005) Now eclipsed by his bad-boy persona, the actor embraced it as a fugitive who fuels an amnesiac's (Adrien Brody) psychological trip in this unusual mind-bender. That fall Renfro was arrested for DUI and later for attempted heroin possession.

THE CHART

BOX OFFICE

1

CLOVERFIELD

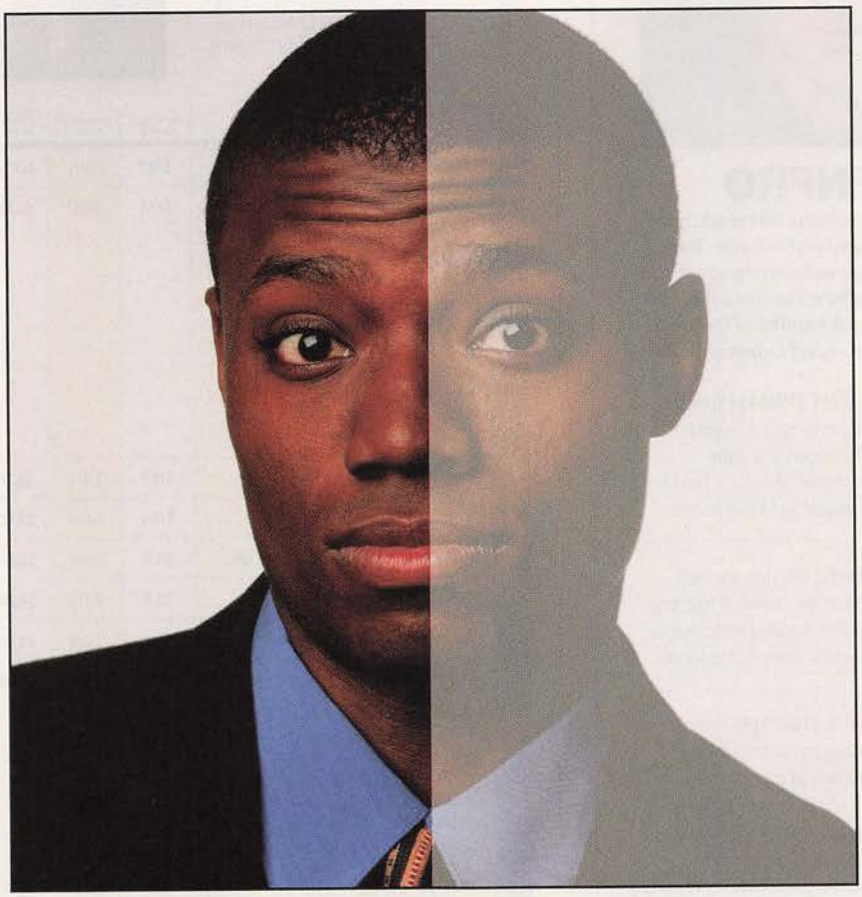
The much-hyped mystery project from producer J.J. Abrams had a monster opening weekend that demolished the previous Martin Luther King Jr. holiday record (held by *Titanic*) and set a new high for a January opening.

THE TOP 20

		WEEKEND GROSS*	NUMBER OF SITES †	WEEKEND PER SITE AVERAGE	PERCENTAGE CHANGE	WEEKS IN RELEASE	GROSS TO DATE
1	CLOVERFIELD	$46.1	3,411	$13,529	—	1	$46.1
2	27 DRESSES *Audiences seemed happy to walk down the aisle with Katherine Heigl in her first big-screen outing since 'Knocked Up.' While it missed the No. 1 spot (in true bridesmaid fashion), 'Dresses' easily bested the debuts of recent old-fashioned romcoms like 'No Reservations' and 'Music and Lyrics.'*	$27.4	3,057	$8,977	—	1	$27.4
3	THE BUCKET LIST	$16.7	2,915	$5,717	–14	4	$44.2
4	JUNO	$12.0	2,534	$4,722	–12	7	$87.1
5	NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF...	$9.6	2,963	$3,242	–15	5	$199.5
6	FIRST SUNDAY	$9.5	2,213	$4,295	–46	2	$30.2
7	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS	$9.4	2,962	$3,185	+1	6	$198.8
8	MAD MONEY *A big-name cast (featuring Diane Keaton, Queen Latifah, and Katie Holmes) couldn't help this distaff crime caper steal enough moviegoers from competitors like '27 Dresses' and 'Juno' to break into the top five.*	$9.3	2,470	$3,755	—	1	$9.3
9	I AM LEGEND	$5.9	2,525	$2,339	–28	6	$248.5
10	ATONEMENT	$5.5	1,291	$4,282	+31	7	$32.7
11	THE PIRATES WHO DON'T DO...	$3.8	1,340	$2,840	–10	2	$8.7
12	THERE WILL BE BLOOD	$3.7	389	$9,414	+97	4	$8.7
13	ONE MISSED CALL	$3.3	1,925	$1,735	–44	3	$24.9
14	SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON...	$3.2	1,507	$2,155	–4	5	$48.7
15	THE WATER HORSE: LEGEND OF...	$2.7	1,661	$1,647	–18	4	$38.6
16	P.S. I LOVE YOU	$2.4	1,626	$1,451	–51	5	$50.9
17	CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR	$2.4	1,352	$1,745	–43	5	$63.2
18	THE GREAT DEBATERS	$1.8	1,021	$1,733	–25	4	$28.2
19	NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN *Already the oldest movie in the top 20, 'Country' looks set to extend its stay after scoring eight Oscar nominations, including Best Picture.*	$1.5	818	$1,859	+23	11	$48.9
20	ENCHANTED	$1.5	767	$1,953	–17	9	$124.3

SOURCE: NIELSEN EDI. WEEKEND OF JAN. 18–21 *WEEKEND GROSS AND GROSS-TO-DATE FIGURES IN MILLIONS
†INCLUDES SOME MULTISCREEN THEATERS AND PRINTS SHIPPED AS WELL AS INDIVIDUAL SCREENS

CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE:
Most Of Us Don't Know The Half Of It.



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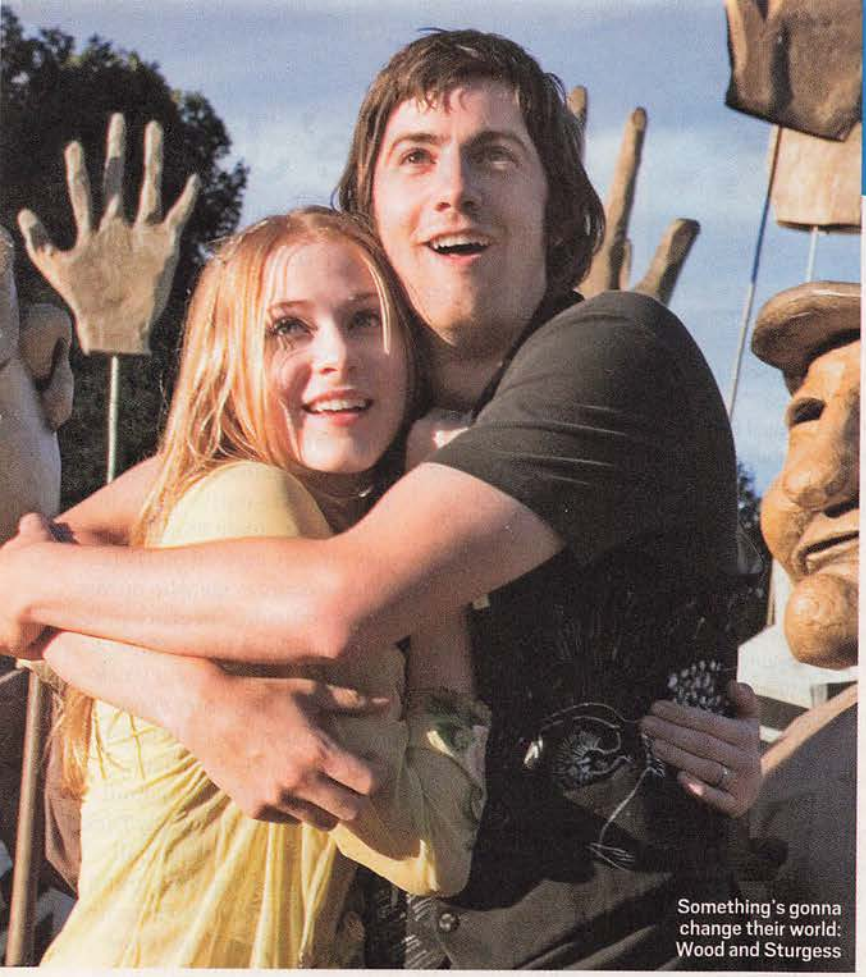


Something's gonna change their world: Wood and Sturgess

Beatle Mania

Don't be afraid to take a magical mystery ride *Across* the tumultuous '60s.

BY KEN TUCKER

Across the Universe
2-Disc Deluxe Edition
PG-13, 133 mins., 2007

As a delivery system for injecting a new generation with Beatles music, *Across the Universe* is efficient as well as playful and ferocious—much like the Fab Four themselves. The movie is almost an opera: plot primarily conveyed through song. And while *Universe*'s thin 1960s-era romance never achieves the emotional complexity of even so "simple" a song as "All My Loving," the film sure knows how to present that melody with an energy and visual invention that make you adore the tune all the more.

We TV fans already knew that *Universe*'s female lead, Evan Rachel Wood, had a beautiful voice from the few times she sang on the ABC series *Once and Again*. The rest of the lesser-known cast, meanwhile—particularly Wood's romantic interest, played by Jim Sturgess—have expressive instruments that only occasionally succumb to the Broadway-style belting that characterizes so many movie musicals. Julie Taymor, the gifted theater director trained in the avant-garde yet best known for her crowd-pleasing stage hit *The Lion King*, combines her skills here. *Universe*'s story is simple: Wealthy American girl Lucy (Wood) meets poor British lad Jude (Sturgess) and they fall in love. Lucy's wayward brother, Max (Joe Anderson), is drafted and sent to Vietnam. They have communal friends in a Janis Joplinesque singer, Sadie (Dana Fuchs); a shy girl named Prudence (T.V. Carpio); and a Hendrix-style guitarist, Jo-Jo (Martin Luther McCoy). If those Beatles-themed names make you wince—well, so did I.

But I was won over by the sheer blithe audacity and sense of fun that Taymor and her collaborators, including screenwriters Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais, radiate throughout *Universe*. Whether it's Wood warbling a chipper version of "It Won't Be Long" while mooning over a love letter or Max reporting for his draft-board hearing under the gaze of an Uncle Sam poster that comes to life singing "I Want You," Taymor fills the screen with psychedelic colors, oversize puppets, and naturalistic choreography that heighten reality the way the '60s counterculture intensified life for young people at the time.

The two-disc deluxe set includes five making-of featurettes that reveal some of the nuts and bolts behind the screen magic, but the best extra is the commentary by Taymor and the film's music producer, Elliot Goldenthal. Taymor possesses a soothing voice; she proves a dreamy yet crisply articulate guide through the proceedings, pointing out little biz bits like the fact that to retain a PG-13 rating, her young dope smokers had to mime passing around a nonexistent joint. Hey, sometimes you say you want a revolution, but sometimes you just have to settle for something in the way they move. **B+**

Backstory

+ It wasn't all love, love, love making *Across the Universe*. At one point, Revolution Studios chief Joe Roth recut and shortened director Julie Taymor's (above) original edit. After some reportedly tense back-and-forth, a Taymor-approved edition was released in theaters.

DVD: The Next Generation

So Santa left a high-definition player—Blu-ray or HD-DVD—under your tree. Still scratching your head about what to put in it? We pick the top 3 titles in each format. —Albert Kim

RATATOUILLE The eye-popping colors of this cartoon gem are why high-def was invented. Freeze-frame anywhere and you'll swear you're staring at a painting. You also get Blu-ray-exclusive bonuses like clips of director Brad Bird brainstorming with animators and a featurette that lets you experience how an alternate score affects a scene's pacing. **BLU-RAY**

HAIRSPRAY The bold, saturated hues are a visual treat, but it's Blu-ray's superior audio capability that truly takes center stage, especially during the high-energy musical numbers. An innovative picture-in-picture feature showcases footage of stars like Nikki Blonsky and Zac Efron rehearsing dance routines and laying down tracks in the recording studio. **BLU-RAY**

BLADE RUNNER: ULTIMATE COLLECTOR'S EDITION Just about any scene in this fully restored version of director Ridley Scott's sci-fi classic is reference-worthy, but the sun-dappled tableau when Harrison Ford and Sean Young first meet, glittering with impossibly lush blacks and golds, should be running on a loop in every HDTV store in the country. **BLU-RAY**

300 In what may be the coolest bonus feature ever, a bluescreen picture-in-picture lets you view the epic swords-and-sandals blockbuster before the CG effects and backgrounds were added (most of the film was shot on a soundstage) and before the color was jacked up to create the movie's heavily stylized, high-contrast look. **HD-DVD**

HEROES: SEASON 1 Fans will appreciate the wealth of cutting-edge extras. Among them: video commentaries featuring the cast and show creator Tim Kring that play alongside eight of the 23 episodes; close-up looks at Isaac's prophetic paintings (created by comic-book artist Tim Sale); and a chart that maps the connections between characters. **HD-DVD**

HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX The details are so sharp that you can count Dumbledore's whiskers—if you're into that. The DVD seamlessly incorporates pop-up trivia tidbits (actor Rupert Grint's dressing room was a popular cast hangout!) and making-of featurettes into the viewing experience. **HD-DVD**

'Blonde' Joke

Jessica Simpson's latest bid for big-screen stardom is no laughing matter.

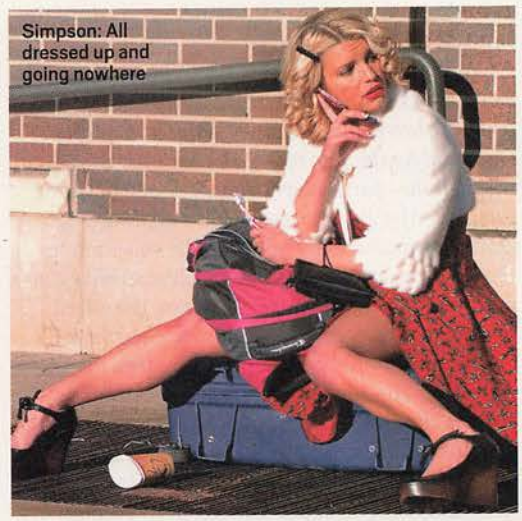
BY KEN TUCKER

Blonde Ambition
Jessica Simpson, Luke Wilson
PG-13, 93 mins., 2007

Oh, how easy it would be to write a nasty slag-off of *Blonde Ambition*, the Jessica Simpson romantic comedy that opened in a few theaters in Simpson's native Texas in December, made $6,422, and has already arrived on DVD. The tale of Katie—a naive country gal who moves to Manhattan, becomes embroiled in office politics, and falls in love with Luke Wilson—*Blonde* is a mirthless mash-up of the 1988 movie *Working Girl* and TV's *Ugly Betty* (Simpson's candy red lipstick and orangey makeup are truly ugh-ly).

Victims in this enterprise include Wilson, who looks understandably baffled throughout, and costars Penelope Ann Miller and Andy Dick as frantically unfunny partners in office maliciousness. Willie Nelson plays Simpson's grandfather; rather than dwell on the *Dukes of Hazzard* duo's reteaming, I'll use this space to plug two good movies: Go rent *Thief* (1981) or *Barbarosa* (1982) to watch solid Nelson performances.

Anyhow, two things prevent me from being haughtily dismissive. First, there's Larry Miller, who, as Katie's boss, is truly funny. A fine comic actor, Miller deserves a director like Preston Sturges, not *Blonde*'s Scott Marshall, son of Garry and nephew of Penny; the latter makes a cameo here. Second, there's a making-of featurette in which Simpson says she hopes this movie will "shift" focus away from "the whole tabloid world of my life" and prove her talent. I feel badly for this young woman. **D+**



Simpson: All dressed up and going nowhere

RATATOUILLE © PIXAR/DISNEY; HAIRSPRAY: DAVID JAMES; BLADE RUNNER: MPTV.NET; 300: WARNER BROS.; HEROES: JUSTIN LUBIN; HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX: WARNER BROS.

Daddy Day Camp

Cuba Gooding Jr.
PG, 89 mins., 2007

This slapstick romp succeeds in little else than tarnishing your memory of two things: Gooding's acting of yesteryear and all the reasons why camp was fun as a child. The Oscar winner hams harder than the most annoying camp counselor while executing odious gags about latrines, skunks, flatulation, and—ick—your diaper-wearing golden years. EXTRAS In a making-of, director Fred Savage—yes, from *The Wonder Years*—muses, "To have Cuba doing this movie... raises the level of everything up, you know, a thousand percent." The sad thing? He seems to believe it. **D–** *—Tanner Stransky*

Groundhog Day
15th Anniversary Edition
Bill Murray
PG, 101 mins., 1993

Was *Groundhog Day* always this deep? What strikes you now isn't how simultaneously barbed and warm Murray is as he lives Feb. 2 over and over, but how simultaneously bleak and hopeful this modern classic feels: Every day is cold and lonely, the film insists, yet we can still make the most of it. EXTRAS Murray is sadly (but predictably) absent; director Harold Ramis is on hand for a mini-doc and commentary, where—answering many a fan's burning question—he posits that Murray's weatherman repeats the same day "for about 10 years." **A–** *—Gregory Kirschling*

The Nines
Ryan Reynolds
R, 99 mins., 2007

John August's directorial debut melds the surrealism of *Adaptation* and the metaphysics of *Donnie Darko*. The overlapping three-act tale of a disoriented man (Reynolds) who might be a junkie, a videogame guru, or God himself is fascinatingly ambitious but ultimately perplexing. EXTRAS Even August, the screenwriter behind *Go* and *Big Fish*, struggles to untangle his script's knots during two audio commentaries. His 11-minute 1998 short, *God*, serves as an inspirational seed...and it's as close to an explanation as you'll get for this tantalizing, infuriating trip. **B–** *—Jeff Labrecque*

Classic Cinema

'APARTMENT' COMPLEX

In the market for a seriously edgy comedy? This Bud's for you.

Sometimes audiences just don't know what to make of films that are both serious and funny (witness: *The Savages*). Considering Billy Wilder's THE APARTMENT is ranked No. 20 on AFI's 100 Years...100 Laughs list, you'd be forgiven for assuming it's a comedy. Yet newcomers to 1960's Best Picture Oscar winner—out in a new Collector's Edition—might be shocked to discover it's steeped in melancholy. C.C. "Bud" Baxter (Jack Lemmon) has figured out how to succeed in business without really trying—by loaning out his bachelor pad for his bosses' extramarital trysts. But the poor "shnook" is actually selling his soul to America's growing corporate machine. Wilder's movie manages to be a scathing social satire and cautionary tale (the corporate lingo is prescient: "preliminarywise," "manpowerwise"); a brilliant physical comedy (Lemmon's tennis-racket-spaghetti-straining skills are superb); and a devastating romance between Baxter and Miss Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine, above with Lemmon). All of which makes Wilder's masterpiece tough to take if you're looking for a laugh riot. But thanks to film historian Bruce Block's fact-packed commentary (note how Baxter's wardrobe improves as he rises in the company ranks), a tribute to the late Lemmon, and a fascinating making-of doc, it's easy to admire the director's precision—the love theme here, the lonely-guy theme there—in blending drama and comedy. Altogether, a very satisfying experience—DVDwise. **A** *—Ari Karpel*

DAGGY DAY CAMP: SUSIE RAMOS; GROUNDHOG DAY: LOUIS GOLDMAN; THE APARTMENT: EVERETT COLLECTION; 3:10 TO YUMA: RICHARD FOREMAN

THE CHART

DVD SALES

1 **3:10 TO YUMA**

Cowboys Christian Bale and Russell Crowe duke it out on screen, but together they ride this Western to the top spot.

TOP 20

		LAST WEEK	BOX OFFICE GROSS TO DATE*	WEEKS IN RELEASE	EW GRADE
1	**3:10 TO YUMA** *Originally scheduled to premiere Oct. 5, 2007, Lionsgate bumped up the release date a full month to avoid a Western traffic jam, getting into theaters ahead of 'The Assassination of Jesse James...' and the Texas-set 'No Country for Old Men.'*	–	$53.6	1	A–
2	**RESIDENT EVIL: EXTINCTION**	1	$50.6	2	C–†
3	**DRAGON WARS**	–	$11.0	1	–
4	**WAR**	2	$22.5	2	B–†
5	**DEATH SENTENCE**	–	$9.5	1	D†
6	**SUNSHINE** *When director Danny Boyle asked techno duo Underworld to lend a few tunes to this sci-fi flick's soundtrack—as they had for Boyle's 'Trainspotting' in 1996—the musicians first declined. After seeing 'Sunshine' and loving it, they caved in.*	–	$3.7	1	A
7	**RUSH HOUR 3**	3	$140.1	3	C+†
8	**THE KINGDOM** *The film—set in Saudi Arabia—was shot in the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates. One star who didn't journey to Abu Dhabi? Jennifer Garner, whose daughter, Violet, was not yet 1.*	5	$47.5	3	B
9	**THE SIMPSONS MOVIE**	4	$183.1	4	B+†
10	**SHOOT 'EM UP**	6	$12.8	2	B+†
11	**THE BOURNE ULTIMATUM**	9	$227.5	5	A–
12	**PIRATES: AT WORLD'S END**	7	$309.4	6	B
13	**HARRY POTTER AND THE...**	8	$292.0	5	B+
14	**SUPERBAD**	13	$121.5	6	A–
15	**RATATOUILLE**	11	$206.4	10	A
16	**TWO AND A HALF MEN: S2**	–	–	1	–
17	**BOOGEYMAN 2**	–	–	1	–
18	**AMERICAN PIE PRESENTS...**	10	–	3	D
19	**THE HEARTBREAK KID**	12	$36.8	3	B–†
20	**LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD**	17	$134.5	8	B

SOURCES: RENTRAK'S RETAIL ESSENTIALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING JAN. 12, 2008; NIELSEN EDI *IN MILLIONS
† ORIGINAL THEATRICAL GRADE

The cast of FX's *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* (From L to R) Danny DeVito, Rob McElhenney, Kaitlin Olson, Charlie Day and Glenn Howerton.

STOP GLOBAL WARMING. BE A PART OF THE 2% SOLUTION

Fortunately, it's not too late to save Danny. Scientists say that we can curb the most dangerous effects of global warming if we cut our carbon emissions by 80% by the year 2050. That's an achievable 2% reduction a year. Everyone has a role to play from individuals to businesses and government. There's a lot you can do today — change to compact fluorescent light bulbs, buy a more fuel-efficient car, ask your local utility to provide green electricity generated by wind or solar power, or work with your local mayor or town council to make traffic lights, government buildings and vehicles more energy efficient. It all adds up. It all helps.

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Miller prepares to testify

In Good Faith

A lawyer has visions of George Michael dancing in his head in ABC's trippy *Eli Stone*.

BY KEN TUCKER

Eli Stone
Thursdays, 10 p.m.
ABC

In the realm of influential TV writer-producers, Greg Berlanti is approaching David E. Kelley proportions. Both are superhumanly prolific: Kelley's churned out *L.A. Law*, *Ally McBeal*, and about 378 other shows, while the younger Berlanti is either the creator or guiding hand behind such series as *Everwood*, *Brothers & Sisters*, *Dirty Sexy Money*, and now ABC's charmingly wifty legal drama *Eli Stone* (debuting Jan. 31). Plus, both men are fond of inserting fantasy sequences and progressive politics into their projects.

But where Kelley tries to pass off mean jokes about unattractive or physically challenged people as "daring" humor (he uses Asperger's syndrome on *Boston Legal* less to enlighten viewers than to make them snicker), Berlanti is that rarity: a pragmatic optimist. His *Everwood* was an idyll about how a good doctor (Treat Williams) could become a good man, if only he scaled back his careerist self-interest. Now *Eli Stone* posits the notion that a fancy-schmancy lawyer (*Smith*'s Jonny Lee Miller) can not only rediscover his soul, but become a soulful, not-humorless seeker of truth.

In the pilot, we learn that Eli has a brain aneurysm that causes auditory and visual hallucinations. He hears organ music and sees George Michael singing "Faith" in his living room. Yes, the ex-Wham!-ster cameos, and yes, it's a bit *McBeal*-ish. Yet Berlanti never turns Eli into a caricature or a collection of tics: He may be a buttoned-down shark, but we learn he got that way partly in reaction to his dad (*Ed*'s Tom Cavanagh), an irresponsible alcoholic dreamer. Similarly, Eli's fiancée (*Species*' Natasha Henstridge) may be a bombshell and the boss' daughter, but she's not an entitled brat: She is, from the three episodes I've seen, genuinely nice, which amounts to a revelation in prime-time women.

Eli visits an acupuncturist (James Saito) to cure his visions, only to be advised that he should heed them, because he may well be a "prophet." Our man ends up going to the Himalayas, where, amid snow and wisecracking sherpas, he tries to resolve his daddy issues and returns thinking "I can't spend 70 hours a week making rich people richer."

Cornball? Yeah. But so what? Miller plays Eli as skeptical of his own sentiments, yet not incapable of feeling them. Berlanti surrounds his hero with a terrific cast, including *Alias*' Victor Garber as his bristlingly intelligent boss and *Everwood*'s wittily prim Tom Amandes as a law-firm bigwig. And as Eli's office assistant, there's Loretta Devine from (well, whaddaya know) David E. Kelley's *Boston Public*. With these superb supporting players helping drain away any potential drippiness from the show's magical-realist trappings, *Eli Stone* proves as solid as a rock. **B+**

Backstory

+ Not only does George Michael (above) pop up in four episodes of *Eli Stone*, but each installment of the series is named after one of his hits. Also look for stars like Victor Garber to sing Michael tunes, although no word yet on whether "Wham Rap" made the cut.

WHAT'S A KEY INGREDIENT FOR REAL CHEESE TASTE?

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A Little Bitchy, Dawg?

Filled with group hugs and friendly feedback, are the kinder, gentler 'American Idol' tryout rounds a good thing? Our judges disagree.

LOVE IT

The emotional caning that pervaded *Idol* last season—culminating with Simon's widely criticized "bush baby" cracks—is gone, and with it went the queasiness that was a side effect of regular viewership. The judges' tender group hug with weepy, heartbroken 16-year-old Temptress Browne alleviated viewer guilt for chuckling when she garbled the title of the *Dreamgirls* showstopper into "I'm Not Goin' Nowhere." And Simon's comparison of Alexis Cohen to Willem Dafoe's Green Goblin was guffaw-worthy precisely because the glitter-faced wacko had already made her exit. —*Michael Slezak*

LOATHE IT

I don't mean to be rude, but *Idol*'s new nice streak is threatening to make this season as dull as Camile Velasco's season 3 rendition of "Desperado." Case in point, Simon's response to Paul Stafford's disastrous performance of "Wait for You": "You're a very nice guy, Paul." Ugh. Yes, Simon's insults last year were egregiously merciless, but let's face facts: We tune in to these early rounds purely for the judges' gut-busting cruelty toward delusional hopefuls. Why else would Fox schedule over three weeks of audition rounds? The last thing anybody wants to see is a three-Paula panel. —*Kate Ward*

SOUND BITES

"She didn't even turn around and look at me. I think she's totally over me!"
—TAMI TAYLOR (CONNIE BRITTON), AFTER LEAVING BABY GRACIE AT DAY CARE FOR THE FIRST TIME, ON *FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS*

"I just woke up in bed and they told me, 'Oh, Bret kicked you off.' You know, I'm a sweet girl. I'm a caring girl. But apparently, I'm also a blackout drunk girl. And, you know, if that's not what he's looking for, maybe he's better off."
—COURTNEY, AFTER LEARNING SHE SLEPT THROUGH HER ELIMINATION, ON *ROCK OF LOVE 2*

"For once in my life, when I say the words *I love you*, I mean it."
—RONALD, ON THE IMPROVEMENT IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH DAUGHTER CHRISTINA, ON *THE AMAZING RACE*

"I have a strange doctor—I noticed his specimen jars all have team logos."
—DAVID LETTERMAN ON *LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN*

"Thank you very much, both of you, for your kind offer, but my uterus is officially closed to devil spawn."
—CHRISTINA (ASHLEY JENSEN), BRUSHING OFF WILHELMINA'S AND MARC'S BABY-CARRYING OVERTURES, ON *UGLY BETTY*

THE CHART

THE RATINGS

1 MONK

Fans surely love Tony Shalhoub's obsessive detective, but could this episode's draw possibly have been the guest appearance by Howie Mandel?

THE TOP 20: CABLE

		VIEWERS*	LAST WEEK
1	**MONK** USA, Friday, 9 p.m.	5.6	–
2	**PSYCH** USA, Friday, 10 p.m. *The fake-clairvoyant drama's return summoned 4.7 million viewers, the series' best premiere since its July 2006 launch. Maybe the show will also bring ratings magic to NBC, which recently announced plans to air 'Psych' and 'Monk' on Sundays beginning in March.*	4.7	–
3	**WWE RAW** USA, Monday, 9 p.m.	4.6	–
	WWE RAW USA, Monday, 10 p.m.	4.6	13
5	**HANNAH MONTANA** Disney, Sunday, 8 p.m.	4.2	–
6	**HERBIE: FULLY LOADED** Disney, Friday, 8 p.m.	4.1	–
7	**SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS** Nickelodeon, Saturday, 11:30 a.m.	3.9	18
	SPONGEBOB... Nickelodeon, Saturday, noon	3.9	8
	ICARLY Nickelodeon, Saturday, 8 p.m.	3.9	–
10	**REPUBLICAN DEBATE** Fox News, Thursday, 9 p.m.	3.7	–
	ROCK OF LOVE 2 VH1, Sunday, 9 p.m. *While its ratings are still foxy, Bret Michaels' premiere drew only 69 percent of the 5.4 million viewers who tuned in for season 1's finale.*	3.7	–
12	**WIZARDS OF WAVERLY PLACE** Disney, Sunday, 8:30 p.m.	3.6	–
	SPONGEBOB... Nickelodeon, Saturday, 11 a.m.	3.6	18
	SPONGEBOB... Nickelodeon, Tuesday, 5:30 p.m.	3.6	–
15	**ANDERSON COOPER 360°** CNN, Tuesday, 10 p.m. *In 2007, Cooper's weeknight news show garnered an average of 800K viewers. But just like presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and John McCain, his numbers surged ahead the day of the New Hampshire primaries.*	3.5	–
	NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY RESULTS CNN, Tuesday, 9 p.m.	3.5	–
	SPONGEBOB... Nickelodeon, Thursday, 5:30 p.m.	3.5	23
	WIZARDS OF WAVERLY PLACE Disney, Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.	3.5	23
	SUITE LIFE OF ZACK & CODY Disney, Monday, 7:30 p.m.	3.5	–
	SPONGEBOB... Nickelodeon, Sunday, noon	3.5	33

* IN MILLIONS WEEK OF JAN. 7–13, 2008 SOURCE: NIELSEN MEDIA RESEARCH

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BY ALYNDA WHEAT

WHAT to WATCH

A day-to-day guide to notable programs*

Evangeline Lilly slaps Matthew Fox very, very slowly

SEASON PREMIERE

THURSDAY 1.31

9–10:02PM

Lost ABC, TV-14-V HD

PREVIEW

It's been eight long months since we last saw you. Eight months since you killed Charlie, sent Jack to the future, and gave him that "beard." And eight months since you told us you needed some time to "take a break." Your words still haunt us: *If we could do things differently—coming on in January with no breaks for reruns, like '24' did—everything will be better. I know that's asking a lot, especially after that Nikki and Paulo business, but please: Let me go.* Now you're back. Sure, you only have eight episodes because of the writers' strike, but we won't judge you for that. We're just eager to see the bold new you—and eager to see our patience rewarded. Welcome back, *Lost*. Now, razzle-dazzle! —*Jeff Jensen*

Monday 1.28

PREVIEW

10–11PM

Making the Band 4 MTV, TV-PG HD

Having exhausted the ways he can manipulate, depress, and perplex male and female *Making the Band* contestants separately, now Diddy puts both genders through the wringer at the same time. Last year's boy band shacks up with hair-gel abuser Donnie and *MTB3* girl group Danity Kane as all three record albums between hookups. There's no need for this tawdry twist; Diddy is what makes *MTB* worth watching: his fascinating narcissism, spectacular cruelty ("No bitch-assiness will be allowed at Bad Boy!"), and the finesse with which he arbitrarily crushes dreams—like a bored millionaire idly picking through a Godiva sampler. —*Kristen Baldwin*

8–9PM

American Gladiators

NBC, TV-PG HD

Let's review: If you watch crappy filler (like this Nerf color war), the networks keep getting paid. If they get paid, TV will only suck more. So either watch better stuff or read a book. Please.

8–9PM

Kyle XY

ABC Family, TV-14

Amanda's back from school, but she won't really say why. Oooh! Maybe she's—oh no, wait, she and Kyle only swapped spit. Never mind.

8–9PM

The Harlem Globetrotters: A New Generation

MyNetworkTV

It'll be just like that *Scooby-Doo* episode, except no dog, no hippie, and you won't know who any of them are.

9PM–CONCLUSION

2008 State of the Union Address

All Networks

Light at the end of the tunnel! Still, it's a tunnel.

9–9:30PM

Jon & Kate Plus 8

TLC, TV-G HD

Omigod, those kids are such adorable birth-control ads.

Series Debut

9:30–10PM

In Treatment

HBO, TV-MA HD

Gabriel Byrne five nights a week through the end of March sounds like all the therapy we'll ever need.

10–11PM

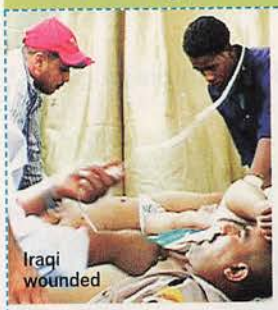
Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations

Travel, TV-PG HD

Is Greek food healthiest? Are we supposed to believe Tony actually cares?

*TIMES ARE EASTERN STANDARD AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Tuesday 1.29


Iraqi wounded

8:30–9:30PM
Baghdad Hospital: Inside the Red Zone
HBO, TV-14 HD
A harrowing documentary about a neighborhood hospital in the middle of a war zone, *Baghdad* was filmed by an Iraqi doctor who's since fled the country. The footage he captured—especially a scene inside an ambulance after a car bombing—offers an intimate, devastating look at the violence that's now everyday life in Baghdad. A– —*Kerrie Mitchell*

'NEW JACK' SOAPY!

1–2PM
All My Children
ABC, TV-PG
Mario Van Peebles joins the cast and flirts with going where just about everyone's been before: Erica Kane's bedroom.

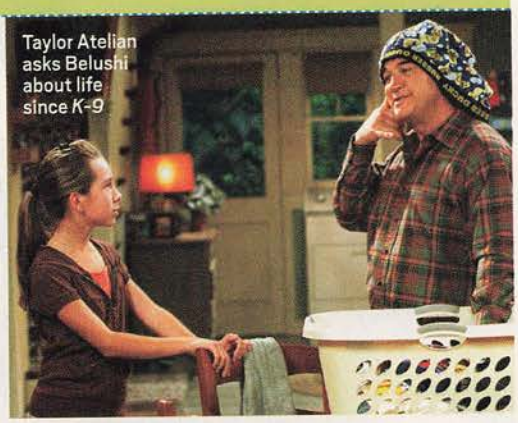
8–10PM
The Biggest Loser
NBC, TV-PG
A "surprise escalator challenge changes the game forever." If the machine can gobble up a 380-lb. man, I *will* watch my shoelaces.

8–9PM*
NOVA: Secrets of the Parthenon
PBS, TV-PG HD
If you're the kinda person who digs secrets like: It has almost no right angles.
**check local listings*

9–10PM
House
Fox, TV-14-DL HD
Hoarding programming? Pshaw! Fox *always* planned to air this new secret Santa episode called "It's a Wonderful Lie" at the end of January.

9–10PM
One Tree Hill
The CW, TV-PG-L HD
This season's four years in the future! Except this episode—it's three years in the past. But not the *old* past, the *new* past—oh hell, they're in college. Get Doc Brown to do the math.

11–11:30PM
10 Items or Less
TBS, TV-PG-DL
Leslie's dad's memorial service is in the bread aisle. Frozen foods seems more appropriate, but he died by the Wonder, so...


Taylor Atelian asks Belushi about life since *K-9*

9–9:30PM
According to Jim ABC, TV-PG-DL HD
For six years, EW has mercilessly mocked Jim Belushi's popular sitcom. Having never seen it, I naturally took their word for it and assumed it's terrible. But with this likely being the show's last season, I gave tonight's episode a shot and—take that, co-workers!—I enjoyed it: Cheryl (Courtney Thorne-Smith) goes out of town, checking in via webcam on "Daddy's naked-lady machine." This leaves Jim alone to freak out when daughter Ruby (Taylor Atelian) wants to get a training bra before going out on her first date. I smiled a lot, and even laughed out loud. Granted, it was once. And in the first 21 seconds. But still. B —*Joshua Rich*

Wednesday 1.30

Season Premiere
8–9PM*
America's Ballroom Challenge
PBS, TV-G HD
Good: It's like that Carrie Ann and Bruno show.
Better: But minus singers...
Best: ...and Carrie Ann and Bruno. **check local listings*

10–11PM
Law & Order
NBC, TV-14 HD
Another nutty *L&O* maze: Start at the lovers' quarrel, then hang a left at the con to get to the politician. If you get lost, the *doink doink*s will guide you.

10:30–11PM
Hollywood Residential
Starz, TV-MA HD
You say: "Why are they at Tom Arnold's house?"
I say: "Where *else* would they be welcome?"

Wentworth feels a bit cross

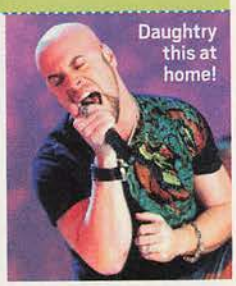
10–10:30PM
Head Case Starz, TV-MA HD
Curb Your Enthusiasm* showed celebrities the joys of mocking themselves through improvisation. So now *Head Case*'s Alexandra Wentworth (*In Living Color*) can get guests to eagerly make crass mock confessions to her as brittle, self-absorbed therapist to the stars Dr. Elizabeth Goode (TV's 412th crazy shrink). Tonight, Richard Kind riffs on how he's a bulimic who likes to throw up on women: Thanks, Larry David! *Case* is an odd mix of *Celebrity Rehab* and *Dr. Katz*, which is a combo only slightly less alluring than Richard Kind and a vomity date. C —*Josh Wolk

Thursday 1.31

9–10:59PM
The Celebrity Apprentice
NBC, TV-PG-L
Someone turns double agent and gets caught. A celeb who can't pull off a short-term acting gig? No *wonder* they need Trump.

9–9:30PM
Biography: Lindsay Lohan
Bio, TV-PG HD
Having a *Biography* done on you at 21 certainly seems impressive, until you ask yourself why they felt the need to do it *now*.

9–9:30PM
Wall Street Warriors
MOJO HD, TV-PG HD
Hey, guess what? One of the guys is a floor trader for frozen concentrated orange juice. Wait, did you just have a *Trading Places* flashback? Me too!


Daughtry this at home!

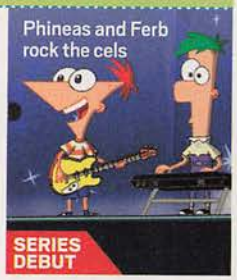
12:30AM–1:30AM*
Soundstage
PBS, TV-PG HD
Chris Daughtry continues his post-*Idol* run of success with an impressive showing on the PBS concert series. The venue may be underwhelming, but Daughtry's stellar pipes on tracks like "Home" and "It's Not Over" more than make up for tacky light tricks. Plus, the show's HD-ready format makes that well-trimmed beard pop. B+ —*Kate Ward*
**check local listings*

Friday 2.01

9–10PM
Monk
USA, TV-PG-V HD
The obsessive-compulsive detective is painting now. Is he into pointillism? By numbers? They both make sense.

Bromance No. 1
10–10:59PM
Las Vegas HD
NBC, TV-14-DL
Mike and Danny sign up for a basketball tourney, because spending every *other* waking moment together isn't enough...

Bromance No. 2
10–11PM
Psych
USA, TV-PG HD
...meanwhile, Shawn and Gus go undercover in a fraternal order, like on the *Flintstones*. (And don'tcha know that must've been half the attraction?)



8–8:15PM
Phineas and Ferb
Disney, TV-G
Phineas and Ferb are pleasant enough step-brothers who land in a host of insane situations. (Episode 1 isn't that nutty—an *American Idol* spoof with the boys trying to be one-hit wonders—but it's still clever.) Created by *Simpsons* and *Family Guy* vets, the 'toon is fun, snappy, and better than most in its genre. Good thing too, because it airs every day this month. B+

Saturday 2.02

Series Debut
1–2PM
2007 EA SPORTS Madden Challenge
GAMEPLAY HD, TV-14 HD
With $100K in prizes on the line, suddenly being "all thumbs" doesn't seem like such a curse.

6–7PM
Forbes 20 Cash Queens of Music
E!, TV-14
That teensy sliver of the Venn diagram where Steve Forbes and Mary J. Blige could magically overlap.

8–10PM
Pride
Showtime, PG HD
Terrence Howard's movie (think *Dangerous Minds* in a swimming pool) gives new meaning to the term *rough waters*. Actually, no, scratch that; it's the same old meaning.

Burke phones in with a *Fever*

9–11PM
Bridal Fever Hallmark, TV-G
Book editor Gwen (*Rescue Me*'s Andrea Roth) wants to get married, so she asks romance novelist and memoirist Dahlia Marchand (Delta Burke, looking younger than she has a right to) for guidance. Surprisingly, this isn't your standard romantic comedy: Pratfalls and silly misunderstandings are pushed aside for honest conversations about what makes a man a "keeper" and what makes a memoir worth reading. Unfortunately, the promising film ends too abruptly, and the nondescript men in Gwen's life don't seem worth all the talk. B– —*Mandi Bierly*

Sunday 2.03

Kirshner catches *L* from Katherine Moennig

9–10PM
The L Word Showtime, TV-MA HD
The *L* might stand for "loose" in the fifth season: The oft-preachy drama is finally lightening up, returning to the soapy fun of its initial—and still best—first year. This week's big drama involves Perez Hilton wannabe Alice (Leisha Hailey) outing a basketball player on her blog and causing a media firestorm. The most fun, of course, is with the First Lady of Crazytown, Jenny (Mia Kirshner), drunk with power now that she's directing an adaptation of her own roman à clef, *Lez Girls*. Her constant berating of protégé Adele (Malaya Rivera Drew) is the most deliciously bitchy boss/assistant relationship since *The Devil Wears Prada*. B+ —*Tim Stack*

9–10:30PM*
Miss Austen Regrets
PBS, TV-G
Feel sorry for spinster Jane Austen? No, no, no, no. This original movie suggests she had four bites of the marriage apple, so perhaps she just wasn't hungry.
**check local listings*

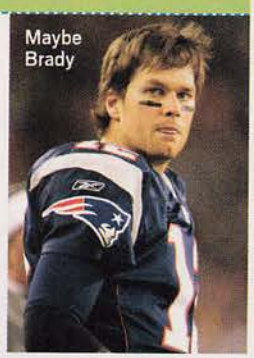
9–10PM
Rock of Love 2
VH1, TV-14 HD
The problem with doing this job is you start to see double entendres everywhere. To wit: "Bret wants a girl with good manual skills..."

9–10PM
The Wire
HBO, TV-MA HD
What do we have to do to get you to watch? You want me to stand on my head? I will. Sing in public? Okay. Punch Dalton? Consider it done. [Ed note: Ouch!]

10–11PM
Flavor of Love 3: Casting Special
VH1
Come see the freaks of tomorrow...today!

'MIGHTY' BIG GUEST
10:15–11:15PM
House
Fox, TV-14-DL HD
By 10:15, we mean whenever the game ends, and the big guest? That's Mira Sorvino as a doctor who falls ill while stuck at the South Pole.

11:45PM–MIDNIGHT
Aqua Teen Hunger Force
Cartoon, TV-MA
Carl traps the Aqua Teens in spider cocoons in order to get them to pay their rent. So *that's* where the mortgage crisis is eventually heading.


Maybe Brady

PREVIEW
6PM–CONCLUSION
Superbowl XLII
Fox HD
To paraphrase Tom Petty—an appropriate choice, since he's performing at halftime—which team will be runnin' down a dream: the undefeated New England Patriots or the surging New York Giants? You heard it here (and, well, everywhere): This Brady Bunch won't back down. —*Dan Snierson*

BRIDAL FEVER: CELLA VON TIEDEMANN; THE L WORD: PAUL MICHAUD; SORVINO: CHRIS POLK/WIREIMAGE; BRADY: ROB TRINGALI/SPORTSCHROME/GETTY IMAGES

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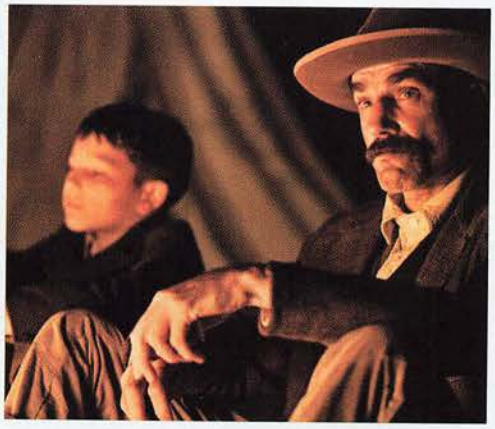
THE A LIST

JANUARY 2008

A guide to movies, CDs, DVDs, TV shows, and books that made the grade (A– or better) in EW during the past few weeks

MOVIES



There Will Be Blood

Daniel Day-Lewis, Paul Dano

(R) Director Paul Thomas Anderson (*Boogie Nights*) presents a classic story of ambition, greed, and the struggle over the American West. Day-Lewis is riveting as Daniel Plainview, a relentless oilman in the early 1900s faced with the cunning manipulations of a revival preacher (Dano). Their battle of wills is set to the backdrop of Radiohead guitarist Jonny Greenwood's eerie, groundbreaking score.

PERSEPOLIS
Voiced by Chiara Mastroianni, Catherine Deneuve
(PG-13) Based on Marjane Satrapi's beloved graphic novels, this animated gem recounts the story of her upbringing during the Islamic revolution in Iran. Drawn in a bold style, the film deftly paints the life of its spirited heroine.

TAXI TO THE DARK SIDE
(R) A disturbing documentary about an Afghan taxi driver who was beaten to death while imprisoned by U.S. forces in 2002, *Taxi* rips open the Pandora's box of America's post-9/11 willingness to use torture as an instrument of war.

MUSIC

Lupe Fiasco

The Cool Billed as a concept album, this sophomore effort finds the cerebral rapper exploring disparate themes and musical territory far beyond his 2006 debut. Check out the jazzy rhythms and rat-a-tat rhymes of "Paris, Tokyo" for proof.

THE MAGNETIC FIELDS
Distortion These New York vets have won us over again with their delectable synth-pop. Frontman Stephin Merritt's poetic lyrics ("It's you, you heartless bastard/You're my one and only") have never sounded as wry—or as sweet.

RAHEEM DEVAUGHN
Love Behind the Melody Maryland's R&B crooner is back with a second album of smooth tenor vox and Motown flavor. His "Friday (Shut the Club Down)"—set to the tune of the Temptations' "My Girl"—will leave you daydreaming of the Gaye old days of soul.

THE WHIGS
Mission Control Certified members of the 21st-century garage-rock revival, this trio has cleaned up the lo-fi production of its 2005 debut thanks to Beck producer Rob Schnapf. The result is a sonically sharper album with more driving, catchy rock beats.

SIA
some people have REAL problems Her soothing vocals have become ubiquitous fare on TV dramas like *Brothers & Sisters* and *Grey's Anatomy*, but we hope this luscious album will cement the Aussie as more than just a Stateside soundtrack wonder.

DVDs

3:10 TO YUMA
Russell Crowe, Christian Bale, Ben Foster
(R) Glenn Ford's original *Yuma* turned 50 last year. So now's a great time to check out this remake of the classic Western, with Bale as a rancher aiming to deliver Crowe's vicious outlaw to justice. In his commentary, director James Mangold describes how he upped the original's ante with tightly choreographed shoot-outs and an even more sinister villain.

PAYDAY
Rip Torn
(R) In its DVD debut, this 1973 road-trip jaunt with country singer Maury Dann (Torn) offers a down-home slice of Americana with a jaded look at the '70s music scene through the eyes of one tough bumpkin.

Sunshine

Cillian Murphy, Michelle Yeoh, Cliff Curtis
(R) Director Danny Boyle's visually stunning sci-fi thriller follows eight astronauts on a mission to save the failing sun. Boyle provides an excellent commentary, and a second track—from film adviser and physicist Brian Cox—illuminates the science behind the cinematic sun.

When Harry Met Sally... Collector's Edition

Billy Crystal, Meg Ryan, Carrie Fisher, Bruno Kirby
(R) Nearly 20 years after its release, this New York City–set romantic comedy about two exasperating friends who should be lovers (Crystal and Ryan) still sparkles. The collector's edition helps explain why in a relaxed, affectionate commentary with Crystal, director Rob Reiner, and writer Nora Ephron.

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THE A LIST

TV

The Wire

(HBO, Sundays, 9–10 p.m.) One of television's most admired dramas heads into its fifth and final season. This year highlights Baltimore's struggling newspaper, where a downtrodden editor (Clark Johnson) finds himself saddled with a cocky reporter. Meanwhile, life gets bleaker for familiar faces, as Det. Jimmy McNulty (Dominic West, above right) continues his quest to nail murderous crime lord Marlo Stanfield (Jamie Hector).

ANTHONY BOURDAIN: NO RESERVATIONS

(Travel Channel, Mondays, 10–11 p.m.) An hour with Bourdain, and you'll be eating out of his hand. This new batch of episodes kicked off with the foodie tasting his way through Singapore. (Shark's head, anyone?) Future jaunts will find him in the culinarily rich Greek islands and New Orleans.

TORCHWOOD

(BBC America, Saturdays, 9–10 p.m.) This *Doctor Who* spin-off may sound outlandish—bisexual Captain Jack (John Barrowman) time-travels to fight aliens—but that's why it's a ridiculously fun romp. Season 2 reveals where Jack disappeared to.

BOOKS

My Revolutions

by Hari Kunzru

(Novel) The '60s still exert their irresistible pull in this masterful tome about a middle-class, suburban family man who tries to escape his violent past as a Vietnam War–era revolutionary while tracking down a former paramour.

BEGINNER'S GREEK

by James Collins

(Novel) This feel-good debut about a hopeless romantic who loses his dream girl's phone number is as charming as it is enthralling.

THE TELEPHONE GAMBIT

by Seth Shulman

(Nonfiction) Who knew that Alexander Graham Bell might've plagiarized a rival? Shulman explores the controversy behind the telephone's creation in this fascinating read.

GAS CITY

by Loren Estleman

(Mystery) A serial killer's spree disturbs the peace of a quiet oil-company town in this gritty thriller.

(PREVIOUS PAGE) *THERE WILL BE BLOOD*: FRANCOIS DUHAMEL; LUPE FIASCO: PAMELA LITTKY/RETNA; *WHEN HARRY MET SALLY...*: PHOTOFEST. (THIS PAGE) *THE WIRE*: PAUL SCHIRALDI

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(From left) Mully Man; Duffy; Santogold; Yeasayer

Your Next Obsessions!

Check out this comprehensive list of up-and-coming artists, picked by influential music supervisors from both television (*The Wire*) and film (*I'm Not There*)

RANDALL POSTER
'I'm Not There,' 'The Darjeeling Limited,' December's 'Revolutionary Road'

SCOTT HARDKISS "My favorite American DJ. His *Technicolor Dreamer* full-length is out this spring. It's like a marathon Parliament-Funkadelic holiday weekend." *(myspace.com/scotthardkiss)*

CASS McCOMBS "Maybe it's because I wish my name was Cass McCombs, but I have a particular affinity for him. He's an undervalued American singer-songwriter." *(myspace.com/cassmccombs)*

MGMT "They're based in Brooklyn. They wear capes and wear them well; it's style and substance for slow subway rides." *(myspace.com/mgmt)*

BLAKE LEYH
'The Wire'

MULLY MAN; BOSSMAN; DIABLO "If one of these Baltimore hip-hop artists doesn't have a hit single in 2008, I'll eat my head. The things they're talking about are forward-thinking: It's not just gangsta—they're not afraid to be positive while talking about real things [affecting their community]." *(myspace.com/mullyman; myspace.com/bossman; myspace.com/diabloflames)*

LAFAYETTE GILCHRIST "Also lives in Baltimore. He's a pianist and has an ensemble with horns—he creates this jazz that's somewhere between funk, hip-hop, and jazz. He's the heir to Thelonious Monk." *(myspace.com/lafayettegilchrist)*

NICO MUHLY "A young modern-classical composer in New York. He's worked with Philip Glass. Nico has an electric-violin concerto that's going to be really good." *(nicomuhly.com)*

NIC HARCOURT
'Gone Baby Gone'

THE TING TINGS "A U.K. duo—just one of those

>EW.COM

+ For more pickin's from *I'm Not There*'s sonic guru Randall Poster and his music-supervisor colleagues, go to *ew.com/obsessions*.

ILLUSTRATION BY BLK/MRKT

Adele

Black Kids

things that as soon as I heard it, I dug it. The songs are real poppy and catchy, but they've still got an indie edge." *(myspace.com/thetingtings)*

DUFFY "She's from Wales, home of Shirley Bassey and all the belters. Her songs are very retro-sounding." *(myspace.com/duffymyspace)*

DENGUE FEVER "They're an indie band fronted by a Cambodian female vocalist. They're definitely unique to L.A., but I think they could find a nice little niche." *(myspace.com/denguefevermusic)*

DANA SANO
'Dan in Real Life'

BLACK KIDS "A group out of Jacksonville with sister-brother vocalists. It's like the Cure meets the Go! Team. Amazing." *(myspace.com/blackkidsrock)*

THE DODOS "Out of San Francisco. They kind of have a Jim Morrison-meets-Beirut sound. They released an EP in '06, but there's a new record coming in March '08. I've heard one song; it's awesome." *(myspace.com/mericlong)*

ASHES DIVIDE "Their album, *Keep Telling Myself It's Alright*, is going to come out [March 18] on Island. It's Bill Howerdel's new band—he used to be in A Perfect Circle. So very dreamy rock with a '90s feel." *(myspace.com/ashesdivide)*

JIM PITT
Music booker, 'Late Night With Conan O'Brien'

ADELE "She's a London singer-songwriter with a soulful voice. Critics will focus on how much she sounds like Amy Winehouse, but she should be judged on her own merits, which are considerable." *(myspace.com/adelelondon)*

THE VIRGINS "They've drawn comparisons to Gang of Four and the Strokes, but they have their own distinct sound: garage and a bit of funk." *(myspace.com/thevirginsnyc)*

FLEET FOXES "If My Morning Jacket, Band of Horses, and Gillian Welch are on your iPod, you'll like this Seattle band's lush, ethereal sound." *(myspace.com/fleetfoxes)*

CHRIS DOURIDAS
'American Beauty,' October's 'The Women'

SUNNY DAY SETS FIRE "They are from

BLACK KIDS: JEN MALER

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AS FOR THE MOST BUZZWORTHY OF THEM ALL?

Our tastemakers, varied as they are, seem to agree on one thing: Ivy League upstarts Vampire Weekend are on the rise. Nic Harcourt lauds the Brooklyn foursome's "really good songwriting"; Jim Pitt marvels at the band's ability to combine indie rock and Afropop ("They call it 'Upper West Side Soweto'"). But perhaps Randall Poster describes their eclectic self-titled debut best when he says, "Imagine New Order sitting down with Paul Simon and talking about the first Talking Heads record, while Pavement plays over the cafeteria loudspeakers." Indeed, EW's own music staff has spent the past few months with giddy, African-tinged punk-pop ditties like "Mansard Roof" and "Oxford Comma" on endless repeat. *(myspace.com/vampireweekend)*

London but have members from all around the globe. It's pop infused with unexpected surprises." *(myspace.com/officialsunnydaysetsfire)*

LUCY SCHWARTZ "An unsigned singer-songwriter who's 18. Her dad was jogging by my house [in Pacific Palisades, Calif.] and handed me her demo. Her songs have the confidence of a woman twice her age." *(myspace.com/lucysong)*

SUNNY LEVINE "He's the grandson of Quincy Jones. *Love Rhino* [out March 4] is his solo debut. Very vibe-y, dub-flavored reggae-tinged pop." *(myspace.com/sunnylevine)*

LIZA RICHARDSON
'Friday Night Lights'
YOAV "He's from South Africa. His record is very on the quiet, cool tip. It's got a Pro Tools sensibility—it's acoustic, but it's looped." *(myspace.com/yoavmusic)*

WALE "They're saying he's a new Kanye West: high-quality, intelligent hip-hop. I like his single 'Nike Boots.'" *(myspace.com/wale202)*

YEASAYER "If you're an Animal Collective or Caribou fan, they fit into that vein. They'll be big in the art camp. And there's a big audience for that." *(myspace.com/yeasayer)*

JAY FAIRES
'Good Luck Chuck'
BROOKE WAGGONER "Composed, arranged, sang, and played piano on all her EP's tracks. It's Kate Bush meets Flannery O'Connor/Southern gothic Fiona Apple. Incredibly cinematic." *(myspace.com/brookewaggoner)*

THE INFAMOUS STRINGDUSTERS "Young kids who can seriously play bluegrass. Their album, *Fork in the Road*, feels like it could've been the score for Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid*." *(myspace.com/stringdusters)*

GLACIER HIKING "Incredibly talented pop songwriters. They're not signed yet, but if you go to the Troubadour [in West Hollywood], it's filled with hot chicks who know all the words. Something's going on." *(myspace.com/glacierhiking)*

JOE CUELLO
Oversees all MTV shows, including 'The Hills'
LOCKSLEY "The most incredible live band, sort of a Beatles feel. Anytime I get a chance to see 'em, I'll check 'em out." *(myspace.com/locksley)*

SANTOGOLD "An artist out of Brooklyn with an M.I.A. type of sound. We're really excited about her for music placement and music-video rotation as well." *(myspace.com/santogold)*

GUSTAVO ALBERTO "An incredible songwriter—really, really clued into merging Latin music with almost a classic Bruce Springsteen songwriting style." *(myspace.com/gustavoalbertomusic)*
—Reported by Leah Greenblatt, Shirley Halperin, and Simon Vozick-Levinson

THE CHART

TOP HEATSEEKERS (NEW AND DEVELOPING ACTS)

1 **DJ SKRIBBLE**

The turntable pro's latest dance megamix made this winter a little more like a beach party for 7K fans.

THE TOP 20

		LAST WEEK	WEEKS ON CHART
1	**DJ SKRIBBLE** *Total Dance 2008*, Thrivedance	–	1
2	**INGRID MICHAELSON** *Girls and Boys*, Cabin 24	1	16
3	**DRAGONFORCE** *Inhuman Rampage*, Sanctuary/Roadrunner	2	55
4	**LEVON HELM** *Dirt Farmer*, Dirt Farmer/Vanguard ➔ *Why is this former member of classic-rock act The Band eligible for the Heatseekers chart? Because he's never had a hit solo album—which could change soon if this well-reviewed disc keeps selling steadily.*	5	11
5	**RHONDA VINCENT** *Good Thing Going*, Rounder ➔ *The bluegrass picker's latest has already beaten her last CD, which peaked at No. 14 on this chart in 2006.*	–	1
6	**NICK SWARDSON** *Party*, Comedy Central	3	12
7	**FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH** *The Way of the Fist*, Firm	6	24
8	**RIVERS CUOMO** *Alone: The Home Recordings...*, Geffen	4	4
9	**SHARON JONES & THE DAP-KINGS** *100 Days, 100 Nights*, Daptone	7	15
10	**WE THE KINGS** *We the Kings*, S-Curve	11	7
11	**BEIRUT** *Flying Club Cup*, Ba Da Bing	14	15
12	**THE MAINE** *The Way We Talk* EP, Fearless	10	2
13	**GLEN HANSARD AND MARKÉTA IRGLOVÁ...** *The Swell Season*, Overcoat ➔ *Awards-season buzz for the indie flick 'Once' helped the '06 CD from the film's stars vault nine spots on the chart.*	22	2
14	**JUSTICE** †, Ed Banger/Vice	15	14
15	**PETER BJORN AND JOHN** *Writer's Block*, Almost Gold	12	47
16	**JOHN C. REILLY** *Walk Hard* soundtrack, Columbia	8	4
17	**MARAH** *Angels of Destruction!*, Yep Roc	–	1
18	**YURIDIA** *Entre Mariposas*, Sony BMG Norte	23	6
19	**MAYDAY PARADE** *A Lesson in Romantics*, Fearless	13	16
20	**MEDESKI MARTIN & WOOD** *Let's Go Everywhere*, Little Monster	–	1

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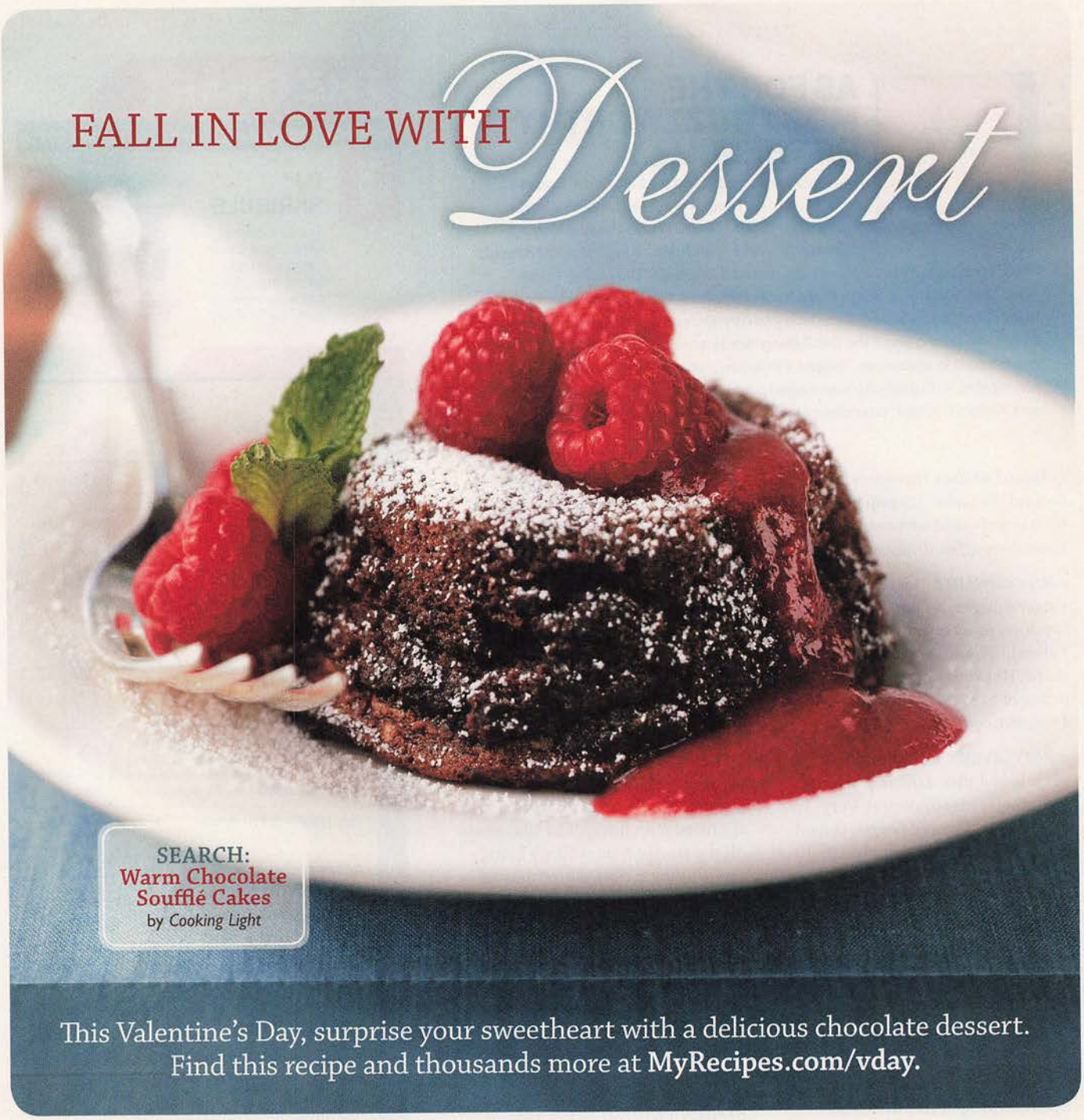

This Valentine's Day, surprise your sweetheart with a delicious chocolate dessert.
Find this recipe and thousands more at **MyRecipes.com/vday.**

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NEW from the experts at *Southern Living, Cooking Light, Health, Coastal Living, Cottage Living* and *Sunset* magazines

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Watch how-to videos • Follow our step-by-step instructions for a perfect Valentine's Day meal

Author D'Souza

Relative Truths

For his luminous second novel, Tony D'Souza retells his multicultural family history.

BY LISA SCHWARZBAUM

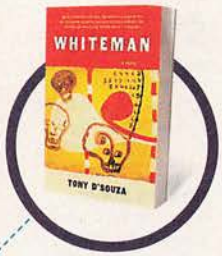
The Konkans
Tony D'Souza
Novel

Is *The Konkans* autobiography disguised as fiction? Author Tony D'Souza says it isn't, but he's ready for readers to assume like crazy that it is. After all, he's the Chicago-raised son of an Indian father and a white American mother, and he has installed the Chicago-raised son of an Indian father and a white American mother as the narrator of his second novel. D'Souza calls his hero Francisco D'Sai, and explains that Francisco's parents, Lawrence and Denise, met in India during Denise's stint as a Peace Corps volunteer. But never mind that D'Souza's *own* mother was herself a former Peace Corps volunteer in India; let's assume the whole tumultuous tale is a feat of imagination. The author, a savvy storyteller with a clear, soulful voice, just knows good source material when he lives it.

What he has created—with an appealingly unfashionable simplicity of language—is a rich, warm, personal yarn, bright with a pride and love that survive even the choppier shifts in his chapters. Anyhow, perhaps choppiness is inevitable when there are so many terrific vignettes to squeeze in. D'Sai/D'Souza has certainly lucked into a flavorful heritage: Both the real and fictional fathers are Konkans, descended from generations who converted to Catholicism following the arrival of the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama on the shores of India at the turn of the 16th century.

In *The Konkans*, firstborn son of a firstborn son of a firstborn son Francisco describes how his father, Lawrence, decisively left India behind in the 1970s, coming to the New World to drink too much and chase the American dream of business, golf, and country club. He tells how his poor-born mother, Denise, fell in love with India and married Lawrence almost as a souvenir. And he delights especially in describing how Francisco's uncle Sam made his way cautiously through America caught between two cultures, just like his nephew. (Sam goes with the flow—and the flow leads, for a time, to an affair with Denise.)

"You are a very small people in India, as are we Sikhs," a fellow Indian immigrant explains to Sam early in his Chicago days, by way of bonding. "But when you roar in the crowd, your roar is heard like ours is. We are the soldiers of India, you are its Jews. Both are good." *The Konkans* is D'Souza's own roar in the crowd, an affectionate exploration of personal identity in order to make sense of conflicting parts—and thus become whole in a multicultural world. In this Age of Obama, the search couldn't be more timely, nor the result more gratifying. **A–**



Backstory

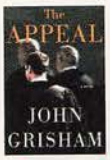
+ Tony D'Souza is no stranger to semiautobiographical fiction. For his first novel, 2006's *Whiteman*, he mined his own experience as a Peace Corps volunteer to tell the story of a young American aid worker in western Africa.

Shock & Law

John Grisham returns to his strong suit with a timely new legal thriller.

BY JENNIFER REESE

Grisham for the defense



The Appeal
John Grisham
Legal Thriller

So he's not a stylist. His characters are flatter than hoecakes, and he leans too heavily on cornpone court action. But with every new book, I appreciate John Grisham a little more, for his feisty critiques of the legal system, his compassion for the underdog, and his willingness to strike out in new directions, even at the risk of embarrassing himself. Sure, he fumbled with his mawkish 2003 football novel, *Bleachers*, but his 2006 foray into nonfiction, *The Innocent Man*, told a powerful and urgent story. And *The Appeal*, Grisham's new legal thriller, is one of the more sobering books this election year.

For decades, the vile Krane Chemical Corporation—run by the even viler Carl Trudeau (maybe the scaliest reptile in Grisham's menagerie)—dumped toxins in the groundwater of a poky Mississippi town. Now the citizens are keeling over from cancer. The novel begins as noble husband-and-wife trial lawyers Wes and Mary Grace Payton win a $41 million settlement for their client. But will they actually collect?

The Paytons are almost bankrupt, but deep-pocketed Krane can afford to appeal, an ordeal that unfolds over 300 agonizing pages, during which we watch a judicial election fixed, the public cynically manipulated, hard-earned reputations besmirched, and justice methodically subverted. The plot would seem far-fetched if it weren't so creepily familiar; this is stirring popular fiction that doubles as an important public-service announcement. **B+**

"*The Appeal* is stirring popular fiction that doubles as an important public-service announcement."

New in Paperback

NINETEEN MINUTES
Jodi Picoult
The best-selling author's latest novel chronicles the aftermath of a tragic school shooting.

SIXTY POEMS
Charles Simic
The new U.S. poet laureate collects recent verse both political and comic (sample title: "Crazy About Shrimp").

SACRED GAMES
Vikram Chandra

In Chandra's epic novel, a finalist for this year's National Book Critics Circle Award, a Sikh police inspector in Mumbai investigates a murder-suicide by a crime lord.

Life Class
Pat Barker
Novel

Paul Tarrant, a student at London's Slade School of Fine Art, falls for classmate Elinor, who first catches his eye in a life-drawing class, but she turns to a successful young painter instead. Still, Paul cannot get her out of his mind, and when WWI breaks out, the two finally reach for one another. Their bliss is short-lived: Paul volunteers for the Belgian Red Cross as a medic. Barker's grim, gray depiction of the hospital at the front, and of the ghastliness of combat, approaches her finest writing, elegant and sweeping. For my money, she is the best English novelist working today. **A** *—Tina Jordan*

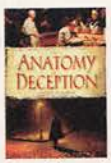
The Serpent's Tale
Ariana Franklin
Ye Olde Crime Thriller

Hearing the phrase "forensic whodunit in medieval England," you might think *The Serpent's Tale* will read like "Er, I fink he got hit in the head wiv a shovel...mystery solved!" But this second outing of Dr. Adelia Aguilar—scholarly Italian expat and gifted coroner—is an impeccably researched tapestry of murder most foul, regal intrigue, and heady feminism. King Henry II's mistress is dead and Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine is being framed for the deed, so Adelia must clear her name to avert civil war. While *Tale* gets a bit sluggish in the middle, it's a refreshing take on a well-worn genre. **B+** *—Marc Bernardin*

Sharp Teeth
Toby Barlow
Supernatural Thriller

Anthony, an L.A. dog-catcher, falls for a dame—who proves to be a were-wolf. She's fleeing a gang of 'em, led by the lethal Lark, whose crew can also pass as ordinary mutts. Barlow gets inside the heads of these mutating canines as they plot against rival bands of lycanthropic hounds and murder innocent humans. It takes a while, but the love-addled Anthony finally smells something fishy—er, doggy—and tries to save his (love) life. I've saved the most piquant detail for last: Barlow writes *Sharp Teeth* entirely in blank verse. Its suspenseful noir poetry gives his tale surprise and emotion. **A–** *—Ken Tucker*

The Anatomy of Deception
Lawrence Goldstone
Thriller



For his new novel, Goldstone invents an agreeable young hero, Dr. Ephraim Carroll, and plunks him into a murder mystery in 1889 Philadelphia that shows nearly every scrap of the author's copious research. The story is packed with historical asides (the introduction of surgical gloves, as well as aspirin) and real-life figures, from artist Thomas Eakins to medical pioneers like William Stewart Halsted, a surgeon who became a cocaine addict. But Goldstone, coauthor of several nonfiction books, saddles his characters with dialogue as wooden as a hansom carriage. The result is less Eakins, more paint-by-numbers. **B** *—Thom Geier*

All Shall Be Well; and All Shall Be Well; and All Manner of Things Shall Be Well

Tod Wodicka

Debut Novel

Burt Hecker, a hard-drinking, overweight 63-year-old widower, has a tendency to live in the past. Several hundred *years* in the past, actually—he's a medieval reenactor, an obsession that's taken a dramatic toll on his family. But Burt's also an elegant narrator, and his efforts to hurl himself into the present are chronicled with smart, casually poetic observations ("Lonna looks me over as if I were a product she had hoped would be bigger, or cheaper"). Even if Burt can't transcend time, Wodicka's novel can. **A** —*Sean Howe*

What I Was

Meg Rosoff

Novel

"I'm not one of those heroes who attracts admiration for his physical attributes," announces the narrator of Rosoff's intense, dreamy short novel. "Picture a boy, small for his age, ears stuck at right angles to his head, hair the texture of straw and the color of mouse." Enrolled in a mediocre British boarding school, our homely protagonist swoons over Finn, a local boy with all the grace and good looks he lacks. But nothing is quite what it appears, including the novel itself. What begins as the familiar story of a delicate adolescent crush soon mutates into a twisty melodrama both fascinating and forced. **B** —*JR*

Now You See Him

Eli Gottlieb

Novel

When Nick Framingham's childhood best friend, a brightly burning literary sensation, kills his girlfriend and then himself, inky secrets from the past are spilled along with the blood. Nick's idling marriage soon falls apart, he plows into an affair with his dead friend's screwup sister, and his idyllic childhood memories are slowly unveiled as lies. This is a fast, haunting read with *Days of Our Lives*–style revelations coming every few pages toward the end. But someone really should've sat Gottlieb down and had a chat about his embarrassing love scenes, which are full of metaphors about nozzles and sprockets. Ick. **B** —*Chris Nashawaty*

LOVE IT/LOATHE IT

Two critics weigh in on Elizabeth Gilbert's divisive best-selling memoir, 'Eat, Pray, Love'

LOVE IT

Shelve it among the fairy tales. Elizabeth Gilbert's incandescent memoir succeeds as a wish-fulfillment fantasy for women who no longer relate to Cinderella. Replace the timid, motherless maiden with a newly husbandless writer in her 30s; instead of evil stepsisters, sub in David, a rebound boyfriend who's Just Not That Into Her. And rather than a pumpkin coach, a juicy book contract transports our heroine to her metaphorical ball, letting her travel the globe, consume mountains of Roman spaghetti, practice yoga, and eventually replace David with a devoted Latin lover. She returns home not just healed, but a superstar. Is it all a little gooey? You bet. I can't defend this luscious confection any more than I can resist it. —*JR*

LOATHE IT

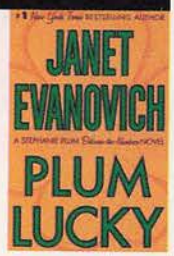
The problem isn't the book, it's the author. *Eat, Pray, Love* is, after all, Elizabeth Gilbert's lavish reward to herself for dumping a seemingly unobjectionable husband and taking up with a cad. For the next year, on perhaps the most expensive backpacking trip in recorded history, she babbles about her selfless generosity to her ex (!), how much pasta she can pack away, and what a devoted, spiritual creature she's become. That's scarcely a triumph over adversity—and even if it were, Gilbert created that adversity herself. Besides, courtesy dictates more grace in winning. If, despite a marked self-centeredness, you somehow manage to end up with everything everyone has ever wanted, *keep it to yourself.* —*Alynda Wheat*

THE CHARTS

HARDCOVER BEST-SELLERS

1 PLUM LUCKY

Janet Evanovich's third release in her Between-the-Numbers series—a spin-off of her popular Stephanie Plum mysteries—debuts at No. 1 in its first week.



FICTION TOP 10

		WEEKS ON LIST
1	**PLUM LUCKY** Janet Evanovich *New Jersey bounty hunter Stephanie Plum protects her grandmother from a dangerous mafioso in Evanovich's latest novel. The first pressrun has produced 2 million copies.*	1
2	**A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS** Khaled Hosseini	34
3	**PEOPLE OF THE BOOK** Geraldine Brooks	2
4	**THE SHOOTERS** W.E.B. Griffin	2
5	**BLASPHEMY** Douglas Preston *Preston's latest thriller revolves around a man-made supermachine with the power to unearth revolutionary answers about the creation of the universe. The novel has 200,000 copies in print after four trips to press.*	1
6	**WORLD WITHOUT END** Ken Follett	14
7	**DOUBLE CROSS** James Patterson	9
8	**T IS FOR TRESPASS** Sue Grafton	6
9	**THE DARKEST EVENING OF THE YEAR** Dean Koontz	7
10	**SHADOW MUSIC** Julie Garwood	3

NONFICTION TOP 10

		WEEKS ON LIST
1	**THE SECRET** Rhonda Byrne	54
2	**IN DEFENSE OF FOOD** Michael Pollan	2
3	**YOU: STAYING YOUNG** Michael F. Roizen, M.D. & Mehmet C. Oz, M.D.	11
4	**BECOME A BETTER YOU** Joel Osteen	13
5	**I AM AMERICA (AND SO CAN YOU!)** Stephen Colbert	14
6	**THE 12-SECOND SEQUENCE** Jorge Cruise	2
7	**DECEPTIVELY DELICIOUS** Jessica Seinfeld	14
8	**LIVING WELL** Montel Williams with William Doyle	2
9	**AN INCONVENIENT BOOK** Glenn Beck	8
10	**HAPPY FOR NO REASON** Marci Shimoff with Carol Kline *Backed by research and interviews with 100 happy people, Shimoff and Kline's self-help book provides readers with a seven-step program to better their lives. There are 110,000 copies out after four pressruns.*	1

SOURCE: *PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*, WEEK OF JAN. 8–15, 2008

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THE FINAL CUT

GRUMPY OLD MEN

By Mark Harris

Almost every year, the Academy Award nominations arrive packaged with an outrage! A scandal! A travesty of justice! This year is different. For once, the splenetic language is actually justified, and the Academy—or at least one key member—seems just as upset as its harshest critics.

Over the decades, no category has given the Oscars more trouble than Best Foreign Language Film. Among this year's contenders, two spectacular movies seemed to stand above the pack: *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, a taut, brilliantly observed drama about a woman trying to arrange an illegal abortion in Ceauşescu's Romania in the 1980s, and *Persepolis*, a heartbreaking and funny black-and-white animated film about a tough, independent woman's struggle to find her place both in and outside of her native Iran. *4 Months* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival and best-foreign-language-film awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association and the National Society of Film Critics; *Persepolis* took the Cannes Jury Prize and a bucket of critics' trophies for best animated film.

But neither movie is among the nominees for Best Foreign Language Film, because neither film was eligible. They fell out of contention after failing even to make the list of nine movies that the Foreign Language voters deemed the best of the year. "It's shocking that our committee didn't include those movies," says producer Mark Johnson, the reform-minded chairman of the Foreign Language branch. "I was extremely disappointed. There are several films I liked that didn't make the cut, and that's fine, but these two are different. I believe that the Academy membership as a whole would have nominated them, and the fact that our committee didn't recognize their merit—maybe I shouldn't say this, but frankly, it's embarrassing."

It's that "committee"—actually a loose group of several hundred Academy voters who volunteer to watch a percentage of the 60 or so foreign-language films that vie for nominations every year—that's the heart of the problem. That massive time commitment excludes just about anyone who has something to do other than see movies all day. Thus, many voters are retirees who haven't been active in the business since Robert Mitchum was the sexiest man alive. Every year, some of the world's most innovative films are being judged by some of the Academy's most aesthetically conservative voters. No wonder something's always wrong with this picture.

"Many of the Foreign Language voters are retirees who haven't been active in the business since Robert Mitchum was sexiest man alive."

For last year's awards, the Academy rewrote its procedures to address this mess; instead of picking five nominees, the committee would now select nine films; then, thirty more active and diverse Academy members would narrow that presumably more inclusive field. Initially, the new process appeared to work. Last year's nominees included *Pan's Labyrinth* (which won three Oscars), *The Lives of Others*, and the superb Algerian drama *Days of Glory*. But 2007 may just have been a year in which the subject matter of some terrific movies happened to come under the heading of Things Old Movie People Like—stories about the horrors of war and Communism. This year's two egregious omissions involved Iran and abortion—Things Old Movie People Don't Like.

So are we back to square one? The challenge facing Johnson and the Board of Governors is steep: Oscar voters with varied tastes and busy days aren't suddenly going to add dozens of Academy screenings to their schedules every winter. So maybe the solution is to build in a yearly taste correction for a flawed system. When Johnson and I talked, I suggested the creation of a discretionary panel that could examine each year's list and add two or three titles that it felt had been unjustly omitted before sending the contenders on to the final voting panel. "That's definitely a thought," he replied. "We've talked in the past about including major festival winners"—which would have qualified both *4 Months* and *Persepolis*. "We have to make some radical changes, and I hope the Board of Governors supports that." While they're talking, the board should also reexamine the anachronistic rule that allows each country to submit just one film. That restriction allows countries to suppress politically sensitive movies—and hurts countries with too many good ones. This year, France's submission of *Persepolis* meant that the equally worthy *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* couldn't be considered.

This is worth all the disgust, because in terms of enhancing a film's ability to find an audience, Best Foreign Language Film may be the most important award the Academy gives. *4 Months*, a truly tough sell, needed the words "Oscar Nominee" atop its ads, and deserved them. This snub seriously hurts its chances of being seen widely enough to do what the world's best films have always done since Jean Renoir's *Grand Illusion* was nominated for Best Picture in 1938—to broaden America's, and Hollywood's, understanding of what great filmmaking can be. ■

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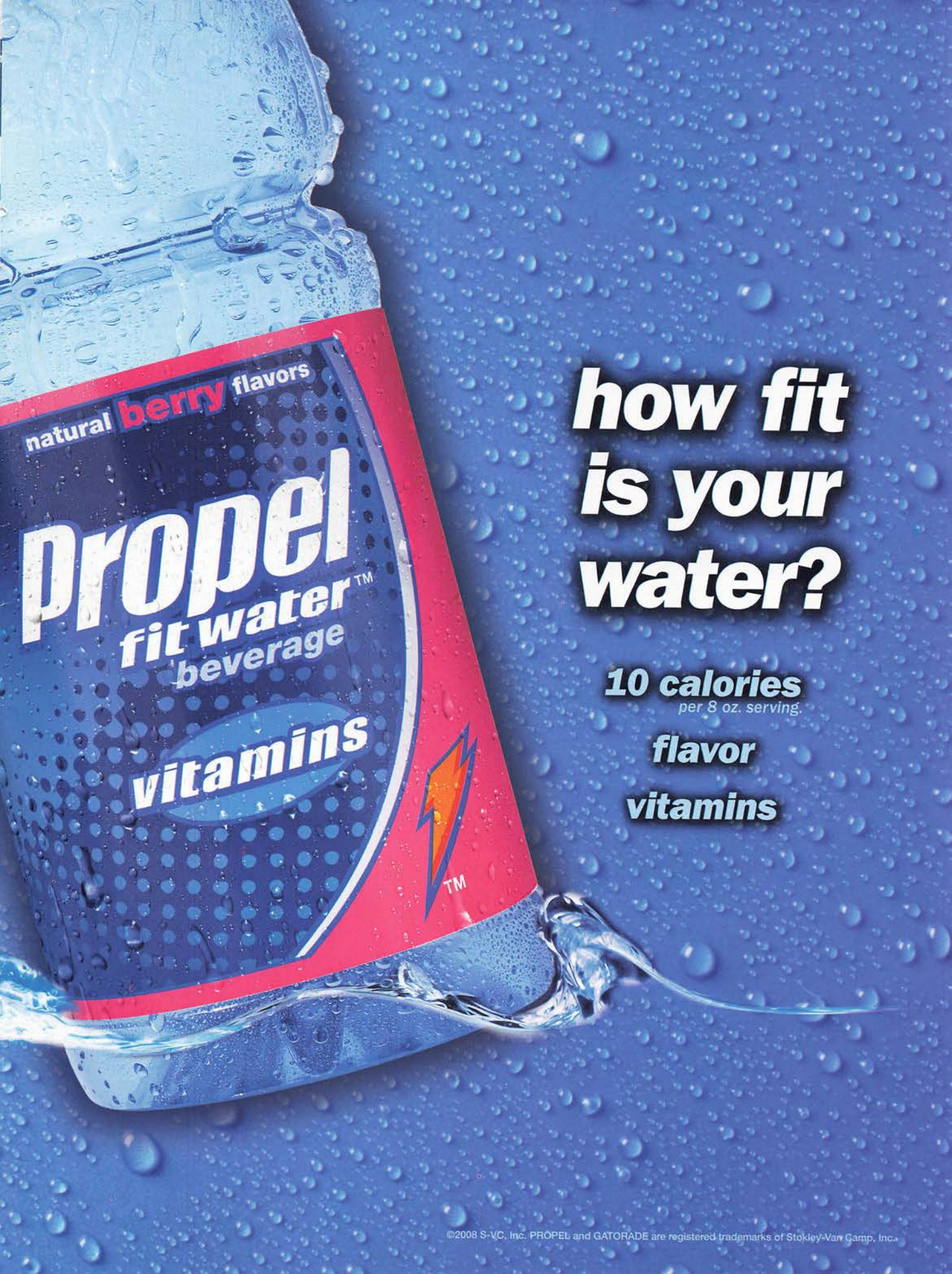

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